



CHARTING A PATH TO VISION 2020

HOSTELLING INTERNATIONAL-USA PROGRAM STRATEGY

Executive Summary

In June 2011, a decision of historic proportions set HI-USA on a new road: unification. As a unified organization, HI-USA is better positioned to improve and expand delivery of its mission *“to help all, especially the young, gain a greater understanding of the world and its people through hostelling.”*

Since voting to unify, HI-USA has determined and clearly stated its intended achievement in Vision 2020:

Hostelling will foster a dynamic, enduring community of travelers with the wisdom, humanity and leadership skills to improve our country, our communities, and our world.

HI-USA’s Organizational Vision is to be:

1. A leading hostel provider in the world.
2. A valued source of experiential learning.
3. A widely recognized champion for intercultural understanding.
4. An effective advocate for youth travel.
5. A vibrant presence in communities across the United States.

HI-USA’s strategy charts a path for transition to a unified, transformed organization, and identifies the major steps necessary to fulfill Vision 2020. With a focus on meeting the needs and preferences of HI-USA’s target demographic—18-30 year old Free and Independent Travelers (FITs)—HI-USA’s five program strategies to realize Vision 2020 are as follows:

Strategy 1: Deepen the Hostelling Experience

The Hostelling Experience extends far beyond the bricks and mortar of a building. It encompasses a diversity of actions promoting cultural interaction and fosters cultural competence resulting in a greater understanding of the world and its people. It is the extended encounter between an individual and hostelling, from pre-trip preparations to beyond travel and hostel stay.

HI-USA will deepen the Hostelling Experience by effectively introducing it to novice travelers unfamiliar with the benefits of hostelling and by deeply engaging experienced travelers and those passionate about travel both during and outside of a hostel stay.

Strategy 2: Enrich the Hostel Stay

Over 400,000 travelers choose to stay at HI-USA’s hostels each year. Overnight hostel stays provide HI-USA numerous opportunities to deepen hostellers’ connections to HI-USA, its mission, the local community, and fellow hostel guests. This strategy leverages the unique hostel vibe to enrich the overnight stay and elevate it to an experience of intercultural understanding and personal empowerment.

HI-USA will enrich the hostel stay by further developing and leveraging each hostel’s unique vibe, local presence, and flavor. It will elevate the hostel stay from a place to sleep to an intercultural and empowering experience. HI-USA will facilitate increased connection between hostel guests and the broader traveler community inside and outside of the hostel, both in-person and online. Best practices will disseminate across the network of association and affiliate hostels to create an enriched, mission-focused hostel stay and elevate the commitment to and recognition of environmental practices.

Strategy 3: Empower and Mobilize the Community of Travelers to Advance Youth Travel

As a unified organization with a singular vision, HI-USA has the unique opportunity to further develop and engage a community of travelers who share and support HI-USA's mission and vision. HI-USA will empower this community and support their efforts to increase awareness of the benefits of youth travel and advance the hostelling movement. HI-USA will develop leaders in the community, provide travelers opportunities to engage with HI-USA at a deeper level, impacting their communities and growing the hostel movement within the United States.

Strategy 4: Grow the Network and Overnights through Increased Capacity

HI-USA will expand its mission impact by increasing capacity at in-demand destinations. While ensuring that current quality standards and hostel market presence are maintained, a proactive expansion strategy dictates priorities be responsive to the needs and preferences of 18-30 year old FITs. This will be balanced by a commitment to small and medium-sized hostels and markets and a diverse array of hostel stay options in both association and affiliate models.

Strategy 5: Develop Facilitated Learning Opportunities

HI-USA's Ends Policy states that it seeks to create hostellers who, *"have intercultural understanding and are active world citizens."*¹ HI-USA will utilize the concept of experiential learning to create and provide opportunities that promote intercultural understanding and support the development of skills and experiences participants need to be active world citizens—locally, nationally, and globally. HI-USA will develop local and national signature learning opportunities that explicitly provide participants experiences designed to develop intercultural and global citizenship skills.

Summary

In achieving these five program strategies, HI-USA will be a dramatically transformed organization—a unified organization with a clear focus on its mission and its coordinated, effective delivery. HI-USA's five program strategies form a cohesive, challenging yet achievable strategy that is fundamental to fulfilling HI-USA's mission, Vision 2020, Organizational Vision, and Ends Policy. These strategies will ignite a strong community, engaged in the hostelling movement across the United States.

¹ See Appendix; HI-USA Strategic Framework

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Introduction

Background and History

Over 100 years ago, German schoolteacher Richard Schirrmann had a revolutionary idea: take youth into the natural environment to preserve their health, welfare, and instill stewardship responsibilities. With this, the hostelling movement was born. Schirrmann's experiences in World War I inspired him to expand focus beyond environmental benefits, as he realized the movement's potential to act as a conduit for understanding, leading to a more peaceful world. The movement was later brought to the United States, embodied in HI-USA's mission:

To help all, especially the young, gain a greater understanding of the world and its people through hostelling.

As with many movements, the growth of HI-USA has not been linear. It has been the direct result of passionate, committed volunteers who gave their blood, sweat, tears, and years to ensure a hostelling presence across the country. As a result, the country grew to 26 Councils, separately incorporated, regionally based organizations focused solely on the advancement of the HI-USA mission. By the beginning of 2010, it was apparent that, though the movement had grown, it was at risk of stalling, a victim of its fractured structure.

In a decision of historic proportions, Councils from across the United States voted in June of 2011 to unify all Councils and the National office, emerging as one country-wide organization: **Hostelling International-USA**, an organization newly focused. With combined resources directed at a shared vision, the organization will be equipped to spread hostelling across the country in a way never before seen.

HI-USA Strategy

The vote for unification launched a two to four year process that will see Councils and the current National office unify into an organizational structure with centralized functions and a strong regional presence. ***The success of the future organization will depend on a clear and powerful vision in both organizational and programmatic strategy.*** This clarity will ensure the goals of unification – to expand mission delivery and impact across the country – succeed and flourish.

Organizational Strategy is the charge that drives all activity within HI-USA. It identifies the change in the world HI-USA will make as described by the mission and the board-adopted Ends Policy. It encompasses the mission, Ends Policy, Organizational Direction, and HI-USA's Global Vision.

HI-USA's Global Vision:

Hostelling will foster a dynamic, enduring community of travelers with the wisdom, humanity and leadership skills to improve our country, our communities and our world.

HI-USA's **Vision 2020** is to be:

1. A top hostel provider in the world.
2. A valued source of experiential learning.
3. An effective advocate for youth travel.
4. A widely recognized champion for intercultural understanding.
5. A vibrant presence in communities across the United States.

HI-USA's strategic direction is:

To focus activity on 18-30 year old Free and Independent Travelers (FIT) when developing and delivering initiatives.

Organizational strategy, as the foundation for all strategies, aligns all HI-USA activities and guides all decisions related to the unified organization's program strategies.

HI-USA designed the **five program strategies** outlined in this document to be implemented before and after the process of unification. Structurally, HI-USA will execute each initiative through three program service areas: hostels, community, and experiential learning. It is important to keep in mind the significant overlap among these areas which creates a holistic package. **Hostels** are what first come to mind when many think about hostelling. They include the buildings, staff, and operations that provide access, value (location, quality, and rate), and cultural immersion opportunities for travelers. Formal and informal **experiential learning** opportunities engage travelers and the community in a way that delivers the HI-USA mission and Ends Policy². Finally, **community** is about fostering connections among individual travelers, affiliation between travelers and HI-USA, and partnerships between HI-USA and community institutions.

The *community of travelers* embraces all those who share a passion for the building of peace and understanding through travel and includes staff, guests, and community members. Utilizing the program service areas to deliver the five core program strategies will ensure engagement following a continuum of travel³.

Conclusion

Five values—*collaboration, communication, diversity of thought, integrity, quality, and respect*—guided the development of HI-USA's program strategies. These values ensured the process drew upon thought and insight from across the country, involving stakeholders and research, following a path to mission-delivery⁴.

Building on the foundation of organizational strategy established by a unified organization, the five program strategies identified in this document will drive HI-USA's pursuit of building a community of travelers who will create a positive impact around the world and at home. The program strategies provide a vehicle for HI-USA to achieve a mission impact beyond that ever achieved and continue the legacy of Richard Schirrmann.

² HI-USA is governed by Ends Policies which dictate the change the organization wishes to see in the world through programming.

³ See Appendix C: Life Long Journey: A Traveler Continuum

⁴ See Appendix D: HI-USA Program Strategy 2012 | Process/Timeline/Participants

Strategy 1: Deepen the Hostelling Experience

As HI-USA enters the next phase of youth travel, the hostelling experience remains core to achieving HI-USA's Global Vision that:

Hostelling will foster a dynamic, enduring community of travelers with the wisdom, humanity and leadership skill to improve our country, our communities, and our world.

The strategy to *Deepen the Hostelling Experience* is of the utmost importance and is the thread that ties together all of HI-USA's activities going forward. It elevates hostelling beyond an overnight stay to "...help all, especially the young, gain a greater understanding of the world and its people through hostelling."⁵

The hostelling experience encompasses the many activities and connections that facilitate cultural interaction and foster intercultural understanding for travelers. This experience can be found in an extended encounter between an individual and hostelling, spanning from trip preparations (pre-travel), to the hostel stay (during travel), to post-trip engagement (post-travel). As such, the hostelling experience may center on a hostel stay, but need not involve one. Activities that deepen the hostelling experience may be developed in communities with a physical hostel presence as well as those without. In sum, the hostelling experience is a life-long relationship with hostelling in which individuals interact at different points in time and in different ways along a continuum building their development as active global citizens.⁶

HI-USA will deepen the hostelling experience across all program service areas (hostels, community, and experiential learning) through the program initiatives listed below. These initiatives are foundational to the following four program strategies described in this document.

A. Connect and Engage Local Travelers

Passion for travel is a thread that binds individuals in communities across the United States. HI-USA seeks to engage travelers who have experienced hostelling and have a passion to remain connected to hostelling upon return from travel. HI-USA will provide opportunities for these local travelers to interact with one another and reflect on their travel experience. This reflection facilitates a greater depth of understanding around the impact of travel and its transformative effects.

Potential activities for this initiative include:

- Events (social, cultural, educational, skill development, etc.) open to travelers either within a hostel or in communities without a hostel at a local meeting spot.
- Establish "local hosts programs" which allow travel enthusiasts to connect with both current and returned travelers by hosting activities. Programs could be held in hostels or in communities without hostels at a local meeting spot.
- Develop vibrant online communities.

This initiative promotes greater awareness of hostelling's profound impact and is directly linked to HI-USA's mission by creating greater understanding of the impact of travel, interaction with other cultures, and self-awareness by providing broader traveler communities opportunities to connect and reflect on their cultural experiences. While facilitating reflection and learning, HI-USA will also seek to build connections between the organization and the community.

⁵ HI-USA's mission statement

⁶ See Appendix C: A Life Long Journey: A Traveler Continuum

Early focus on this initiative allows for greater mission impact and an increased awareness of HI-USA. HI-USA will identify and reach out to an untapped community of local travelers waiting to be more involved in hostelling and supporting the HI-USA mission.

B. Infuse and Communicate Mission within Hostel Operations

Although the hostelling experience is more than an overnight stay, HI-USA's large current network of hostels allows for immediate opportunity around mission impact. This initiative will further elevate over one million overnights a year from an affordable overnight into an empowering guest experience, differentiating the HI-USA stay from that at other domestic hostel providers.

As a nonprofit, HI-USA operates association hostels⁷ and licenses affiliate hostels⁸ as a means for realizing its organizational mission. As such, HI-USA is committed to ensuring that its hostels and visitors' hostel stays are mission-based. As part of this initiative, hostels will further incorporate the mission into operations as well as increase their focus on ensuring mission communications are highly visible and purposefully directed to the hostel guest audience. Greater guest awareness of the role of the hostel stay in supporting intercultural exchange and understanding will make a dynamic impression on guests and help ensure that they identify with the mission and continue their involvement with hostelling. HI-USA will invest in activities that go beyond regular hostel activities. The activities will be designed with the explicit focus of promoting intercultural understanding.

Examples of potential activities for this initiative include:

- Expand existing communal design elements within HI-USA hostels to further strengthen the connections between hostellers and the local community.
- Create compelling opportunities for hostellers to interact with one another and the local community, while encouraging intercultural awareness and understanding.
- Organize speaker series with partner organizations who are committed to facilitating growth around cultural awareness and understanding.
- Highlight local culture and themes in each HI-USA hostel through integrated communications and physical design such as on-site artwork and local materials.

As part of this initiative HI-USA will promote cultural awareness subtly (through layout, displays) and overtly by encouraging guest participation in activities during their stay.

⁷ Hostels owned and operated by HI-USA, both through the National Office and/or Councils.

⁸ Hostels independently owned and licensed through HI-USA.

C. Ensure Mission-Based Affiliate Hostel Partnerships

Affiliate hostels are a valued and crucial component of HI-USA's hostel network⁹. They provide an avenue for increased mission impact and a greater diversity of traveler experiences. Historically, HI-USA resources for intentional mission activity were directed to association hostels. Through this initiative, HI-USA will launch activities to assure affiliates participate as equals in providing mission-focused hostelling experiences. As collaborators, affiliate hostels will be encouraged to further their mission and serve as hostelling ambassadors in their local community.

Implementation of this initiative will require a collaborative approach amongst affiliate owners and HI-USA and recognition of the uniqueness of properties. This may identify needs for the provision of new resources to affiliate hostels, either through staff support and/or through a review of the relationship between HI-USA and affiliates. In doing so, HI-USA seeks to ensure consistent mission delivery across HI-USA's combined association and affiliate hostel network.

Success in this initiative will require refining HI-USA's means of delivering the mission within hostels as described in initiatives 1A and 1B.

D. Provide Introductory Travel Programs

Exposure to travel opportunities can be the catalyst that ignites a desire to experience new places and cultures. Through the development of introductory programs that promote travel within the United States, HI-USA will provide unique offerings to novice travelers that will position hostelling as a gateway to intercultural experiences and understanding. Introductory travel programs will focus on domestic opportunities demonstrating the accessibility of travel in one's own "backyard" and reinforcing the idea that travel through hostelling creates profound and lasting personal impact.

This initiative introduces HI-USA to new travelers, promotes the mission, and encourages hostel stays within the network.

Potential activities for this initiative include:

- Host conferences focused on domestic travel and cultural issues that incorporate hostelling and/or hostel stays.
- Create new travel education seminars focused intently on domestic opportunities. Re-design current education seminars to appeal to 18-30 year old FIT needs and expectations.¹⁰
- Hold seminars in communities both with and without a physical hostel presence.
- Developing online travel education applications and disseminating information for the pre, current and returning traveler.

In developing this initiative, HI-USA will consider partnership opportunities. Many organizations already operate in this field and partnerships may prove more effective than building activities independently. This initiative allows HI-USA to focus more directly on the pre-travelers, exposing them to positive travel stories, increasing their confidence around exploration, and promoting hostels and the hostelling experience as a way to increase intercultural understanding.

⁹ HI-USA's Hostel Network includes all hostels, owned or licensed by HI-USA, commonly described as association and affiliate hostels.

¹⁰ HI-USA's National Transition Board identified 18-30 year old FITs as the organizational focus in 2012. See Appendix B: HI-USA Strategic Framework

Strategy 2: Enrich the Hostel Stay

With over one million overnight stays a year, HI-USA's hostel network allows for direct interaction between HI-USA and travelers. Access to these travelers provides a unique opportunity to impact guests and affect their understanding of diverse cultures. This strategy strongly supports the Vision 2020 goal to *"Be a leading hostel provider in the world."* Successful achievement of this strategy will strengthen HI-USA's role as an effective advocate for youth travel and a widely recognized champion of intercultural understanding.

As the organization unifies, this strategy will provide greater consistency across HI-USA by disseminating best practices to hostels across the country and by listening to and addressing the needs of 18-30 year old FITs. At the same time, the diversity of hostel stay experiences will be highlighted by promoting local hostel adaptations that reflect the uniqueness of local communities.

HI-USA will differentiate itself from other budget accommodation providers through establishing and refining high quality and value in all hostels. Further differentiation will be found in the mission-based activities that provide not only a "fun" experience, but also an enriching experience that empowers hostellers and expands intercultural understanding.

A. Develop Unique Hostel Vibe

Hostel vibe is a term used to describe the atmosphere a hosteller experiences within the hostel building. It depends on everything from the layout of a hostel to the interaction of staff with guests. HI-USA is committed to creating a hostel vibe that attracts its primary audience while promoting the mission and connecting guests with one another and the community.

The comfort and willingness of guests to open up to opportunities for greater cultural understanding and exposure within the hostel is heavily dependent upon and facilitated by staff. Creating the unique hostel vibe requires staff who can balance the need for excellent customer service while promoting inter-personal connections and understanding of HI-USA's intercultural mission. This will require HI-USA to proactively address staffing fit and provide training on how to promote HI-USA's mission to the target demographic in every staff-guest interaction.

Three key issues must be addressed in developing a desired hostel vibe:

1. Relevant to 18-30 year old FIT

Designing activities relevant to HI-USA's target demographic will require proactively developing a strong understanding of their travel preferences and interests. This will require collecting HI-USA proprietary data as well as information from external resources. For this data to be useful, HI-USA must have the capacity to analyze this information and identify implications for hostel operations and design. HI-USA must translate research insights into practical applications across the network. HI-USA will commit to responding to the needs and demands of the target demographic to stay both appealing and impactful.

2. Integrated Communications

HI-USA will create a seamless hostelling experience, starting before a trip, throughout the hostel stay, and continuing after the stay, by connecting hostellers to one another and our hostel network via integrated communication platforms and taking advantage of the efficiency of digital and social media technology tools and applications. The 18-30 FIT connect virtually with great frequency and utilize their virtual connections to enhance face-to-face encounters¹¹. Integrated communications will facilitate community building in advance of a hostel stay and allow for the continued

¹¹ See Appendix E: HI-USA Program Strategy2012 | Overview of Survey, Research, and Interviews

development of the hostelling community outside of a hostel stay. Communications can be used to encourage travelers to reflect on the impact of hostelling and will strengthen their affinity to HI-USA by building upon interaction with a local, national, and international community of travelers.

3. Groups

Many hostels currently host a significant number of group stays, many of which include guests who are not part of the 18-30 FIT target demographic. HI-USA will align its operational plan for groups with its 18-30 FIT focus. In doing so, HI-USA will need to take into account FIT guest satisfaction, the unique appeal of hostels to group guests, the maintenance of an appealing hostel vibe, and financial needs. This will be done through:

- Focusing efforts on attracting groups that fit with the hostel vibe desired by 18-30 years old FITs while not excluding groups who fall outside the age range.
- Educating groups about HI-USA's mission focus.
- Encouraging groups serving those over 18 years of age to interact with other hostel guests and the hostelling community so that group members internalize the FIT experience and are encouraged to become future FITs and HI-USA guests.
- Proactively informing non-group guests of the visiting group's focus and encouraging appropriate interactions

B. Ensure a Network Maintained for High Quality Experiences

HI-USA's large network of high quality hostels is a competitive strength and a benefit to travelers seeking diverse travel experiences. As HI-USA expands its network, it must maintain its current market position and high standards of quality. To ensure that market presence and share is not diminished, HI-USA must react swiftly and responsibly with an appropriate level of investment in associate hostels when its long-term viability is threatened by quality challenges relating to facility maintenance or operations. This commitment is also highlighted in Strategy 4 (Network Growth).

C. Expand Environmental Sustainability Efforts

HI-USA is committed to environmental sustainability within all of its operations. This commitment is for both the societal good of environmental preservation as well as in response to guest values and expectations. While HI-USA's Quality Standards¹² currently include some environmental targets, the organization will expand on these efforts. Research will be needed on launching more environmentally efficient and responsible methods of operations for incorporation across the network of hostels. HI-USA will provide a system for all hostels, to become third-party certified in meeting environmental objectives.

In addition to certification, HI-USA will increase and improve its communications with guests around its environmental standards and will seek to incorporate positive environmental practices into experiential learning opportunities.

¹² HI-USA's Quality Standards ensure that hostellers are assured of a level of consistent quality among hostels across the country. They are aligned with those of IYHF and were last revised in 2006. Hostels are evaluated yearly on their adherence to these Quality Standards which seek to ensure each hostels is; clean, well maintained, safe and secure, mission focused, guest responsive, staff friendly, and legally mindful.

D. Provide Local Experiences to Hostel Guests

This initiative provides a means for local communities to participate in the hostel stay experience by highlighting unique and interesting aspects of the local community and encouraging its exploration. Provision of local, community-centered experiences will enrich the overnight stays of guests and address a documented desire of 18-30 years old FITs for “authentic” experiences¹³. Guests will gain a means to reflect on the different communities they visit and develop a greater appreciation for diverse peoples and cultures.

A variety of platforms may be used to promote this initiative, including:

- Train hostel staff and volunteers to connect visitors with local, authentic experiences.
- Create opportunities for the local community to interact with hostel guests.
- Provide live and virtual forums and interpretive displays highlighting local art, culture, and history.

Potential activities for this initiative include:

- Host panels of local volunteers to engage hostellers in discussions on community issues .
- Walking tours that incorporate reflective elements to deepen the understanding of the community and foster intercultural understanding.
- Provide virtual pre-visit information and connections to the community.
- Create local partnerships with like-minded organizations offering experiences of interest to hostel guests.
- Co-sponsor community events geared to and accessible by hostel guests.

This initiative confirms the strategic importance of these activities (some are already in play across the organization) and their strength as a means to enhance the hostel stay and further HI-USA’s mission.

E. Support and Connect the In-Hostel Community of Travelers

HI-USA interacts daily with thousands of travelers staying within its network. This initiative seeks to strengthen the hostel community by providing opportunities for increased interaction of travelers *within* the hostel. Whereas some elements of this initiative are subtle, such as using hostel design and access to common space to promote guest interaction, other activities are more direct, such as:

- Facilitate activities open to all guests.
- Sponsor social events within the hostel encouraging interaction.
- Promote both face-to-face and virtual interactions.

Supporting and growing the hostel community will provide HI-USA additional opportunities to expose guests to its mission and create a sense of belonging and loyalty to HI-USA. The traveler will enjoy a richer hostel stay that will form the foundation for ongoing commitment to and involvement in hostelling.

¹³ “Authentic Experiences” are defined as experiences that reflect the feel and vibe of the community in which a hostel is located. They must not be overly contrived.

F. Establish Hostel Classification System

HI-USA's hostel network offers a variety of hostel choices. This variety reflects its Global Ends Policy (See Appendix; Framework), which includes the importance of and commitment to a network offering diverse hostel stay experiences. This diversity is expressed through the variety of hostel locations, the unique character of local communities, and the different types of hostelling facilities.

This initiative will promote guest satisfaction with the provision of a clear variety of options through a hostel experience classification system to manage guest expectations. This system will inform guests prior to arrival the expected type of stay experience. Potential categories will extend beyond hostel size classifications to include categorization around urban experiences, boutique facilities, rural locations, rustic/wilderness sites, etc. Empowering guests to make informed decisions around the type of stay they seek will better ensure that guest expectations are aligned with hostel offerings.

Strategy 3: Empower and Mobilize the Community of Travelers to Advance Youth Travel

HI-USA defines community as “fostering connections among individual travelers, affiliation between travelers and HI-USA, and partnerships between HI-USA and community institutions with the goal of building a group of individuals who value travel as a meaningful life experience.”¹⁴ This strategy focuses on engaging and empowering a community of travelers who embrace HI-USA’s mission, the hostelling movement, and youth travel as a means for positive change. It expands HI-USA’s reach outside of its own network of hostels, moving past the physical element of hostels, into the overall hostelling movement throughout the United States.

Through this strategy, HI-USA seeks to empower and engage individuals around the country who wish to have a deeper connection with the hostelling movement, moving them beyond program participants to active world citizens and advocates for intercultural understanding. Initiatives designed to empower participants provide tools for developing the ability to understand and articulate one’s own beliefs and values while advocating for and promoting tolerance and intercultural understanding. Mobilizing this community deepens their connection to the lessons of travel, providing opportunities for the community to develop leadership skills and stronger connections through championing the hostelling movement with peers around the world.

By engaging and mobilizing an active community of travelers, HI-USA will leverage its leadership position in the hostelling movement, make a positive impact on local communities, and actively support policies that promote youth travel. Through the initiatives described under this strategy, HI-USA will fulfill multiple elements of HI-USA’s Vision 2020 to become:

- A widely recognized champion for intercultural understanding,
- A vibrant presence in communities across the United States, and
- An effective advocate for youth travel.

HI-USA will mobilize a community of travelers—young adults, HI-USA volunteers, partners, and staff— in-person and virtually throughout the country. HI-USA seeks not only to unite, grow, and lead this community of travelers in support of its mission, but also to mobilize it for advocacy.¹⁵

Empowering and mobilizing a community of travelers will benefit community members and HI-USA:

- Participants internalize the lessons and insights achieved through travel and hostelling and share these with peers and the broader community.
- Participants develop leadership skills and mobilize their peers in support of a shared agenda.
- Domestic support for HI-USA and hostelling increases as its community of support grows and the public becomes better informed and educated about HI-USA.
- HI-USA becomes the go-to resource for youth travel issues.
- HI-USA is better positioned to influence local, regional, and national policy makers in support of its mission, hostelling, and youth travel.

¹⁴ See Appendix A: Terminology Index for HI-USA Strategy

¹⁵ The term “advocacy” in this document broadly refers to increasing awareness of and support for the hostelling movement as well as public engagement supporting causes or policies related to youth travel.

A. Provide Travel Programs

This initiative was first described under Strategy 1, “Deepening the Hostelling Experience.” Under Strategy 3, this initiative will extend programs beyond introductory domestic travel programs, expanding to reach both new *and* seasoned travelers. Programs will include a more deliberate, reflective element, and development of tools that facilitate the transition of community members from participants to advocates.

HI-USA will develop additional activities that support advocacy or include a specific call to action. Recognizing that many organizations offer travel programs, HI-USA will consider partnerships when developing this program in addition to, or instead of, creating its own.

B. Establish HI-USA Ambassadorship Program

HI-USA will provide opportunities to engage travelers who are already familiar with, or who have already experienced HI-USA and hostelling and want to contribute to the movement. HI-USA will provide opportunities for community members to communicate HI-USA’s mission, hostelling’s positive social impact, and to encourage others to support hostelling. This initiative is distinct from marketing,—which focuses on driving visitors to hostels, and will focus on face-to-face and virtual advocacy around the broader mission of HI-USA.

Examples of how HI-USA may provide opportunities for ambassadorship include:

- Support outreach at general public events.
- Coordinate community members to represent the organization through speaking engagements.
- Identify and connect with like-minded organizations for partnerships and co-branding opportunities.
- Form and lead advocacy efforts focused on expanding awareness of hostelling and its positive social impacts.

Identifying oneself as an ambassador for the hostelling movement strengthens the internalization of the HI-USA’s mission and encourages leadership development.

C. Mobilize Community

HI-USA will develop a youth travel agenda and drive its implementation through community action. HI-USA will mobilize 18-30 year old hostellers and their supporters to enact a youth travel agenda. This may involve educating the public; speaking with local, regional, and national government officials and policy makers; and collaborating with other organizations in developing, advocating for, and actively participating in support of youth travel issues.

As needed, advocacy will be used to support hostel development. This may include mobilizing community members to communicate the benefits of a hostel within a community; expressing support for HI-USA through letter writing, signature campaigns, attendance at government meetings; and other activities.

Introductory travel programs and an ambassadorship program will build a community foundation of knowledgeable and engaged hostellers which will benefit any mobilization initiative. Advocacy may be either reactive (in response to an opportunity or threat) or proactive (when internal plans and resources align).

Strategy 4: Grow the Network and Overnights through Increased Capacity

HI-USA unification creates greater capacity for expansion. Growing the network of hostels will increase the number of hostellers impacted by HI-USA's mission and awareness of the concept of hostelling. This strategy focuses on the physical element of the hostelling experience. Realizing HI-USA's vision to be "*a leading hostel provider in the world*" will be one part of creating "*a vibrant presence in communities across the United States*." In addition, a greater presence nationally will strengthen the organization's credibility and ability to be "*an effective advocate for youth travel*."

HI-USA will continue to respond to strong hostel development opportunities across the country. This strategy defines a proactive process for hostel development. As emphasized in Strategy 2, maintaining current market share is a top priority. This goes beyond setting a standard of quality to the preservation of market share in events of lease expirations or possible hostel closures.

HI-USA will direct capacity expansion plans using criteria emphasizing the travel preferences of 18-30 year old FITs. In addition, HI-USA will guide growth with a commitment to diverse hostel-stay experiences. These include not just a variety of destinations, but also a commitment to small and medium-sized hostels as articulated in the HI-USA's Ends Policy.¹⁶ HI-USA will manage expansion in three areas.

A. Prioritize Markets for Expansion

HI-USA will identify the top 20 market destinations for 18-30 years old FITs and prioritize these destinations for expansion. In prioritized destinations where HI-USA already has a presence, HI-USA will analyze capacity relative to current and future demand. In prioritized destinations where HI-USA lacks a presence, HI-USA will determine priority based on the following criteria, listed in order of importance:

- Demand by 18-30 FITs
- Return on investment
- Sustainable ongoing operations
- Iconic American locations
- Travel access to location

Given the complexity, time, and money involved in hostel development and expansion, HI-USA will seek to initiate two to three of the highest priority development projects within the Vision 2020 Timeline.

¹⁶ See Appendix B: HI-USA Strategic Framework

B. Embrace Mid-Sized and Smaller Hostels and Markets

HI-USA confirmed the importance of an affordable and diverse hostel network in the Ends Policy¹⁷ adopted prior to the unification vote. The policy promises to focus on maintaining and developing mid-sized and smaller hostels and markets (i.e., markets that can support hostels of 60 beds or less).

In response, HI-USA will develop at least as many mid-sized and smaller hostels compared to larger properties through 2020. HI-USA will evaluate these development opportunities separately from larger hostel properties using the five key evaluation criteria (demand by 18-30 FITS, positive return on investment, sustainable ongoing operations, iconic American locations, and travel access to location). HI-USA will give special consideration to projects based on the level and history of community support, including the amount of local funds contributed compared to project cost and the importance of a continuing organizational presence when an existing hostel is jeopardized

C. Expand Affiliate Program

A robust affiliate model can provide opportunities for a larger network, more affordable lodging options, greater variety of experiences, and—most significantly—greater mission impact. Once market priorities are established, HI-USA will work to affiliate independent hostels in communities not currently served by the HI-USA network. HI-USA must seek out hostel owners who support HI-USA's mission and clearly define to them the benefits of affiliation. In order to attract affiliates, this initiative will require a thorough review of HI-USA's current affiliate model, including that described in Strategy 1.

D. Pursue Diversity through Opportunity

The preceding expansion initiatives suggest a strategic and proactive development path. HI-USA will prioritize financial and human resources around these efforts. Unexpected hostel development opportunities will continue to arise and HI-USA must be prepared to respond flexibly to these opportunities. In the past, HI-USA developed hostels through partnerships with agencies such as the National Park Service, State Parks, and other government agencies, and other donors and groups that resulted in positive diversification of the hostel network. HI-USA will consider opportunistic growth, both through development and with affiliates, and prioritize based on the selection criteria identified above.

¹⁷ The Ends Policy relating to a diverse network of hostels in its entirety: "Hostellers have access to an affordable and diverse network of hostels in the United States; 1.1.1 Hostels provide friendly, safe, and secure overnight accommodations and programming opportunities; 1.1.2. Access is met by hostels being present in markets with sufficient demand with a balanced approach within the whole network that represents a diversity of culture, geography, community, and traveler experience; 1.1.3. Affordability is met by accommodations rates that are valued by the individual traveler; 1.1.4. The network represents a range of size, style, and location of hostels to support travelers' choices in experiencing the richness and breadth of the natural, cultural, and geographic diversity within the United States."

Strategy 5: Develop Facilitated Learning Opportunities

HI-USA's seeks to develop Active World Citizens, defined as individuals who:

- Work to make things better in and outside of their community,
- Advocate for tolerance and intercultural understanding
- Work to stop destructive stereotypes and
- Seek peaceful resolutions for conflict.¹⁸

This strategy will create signature programs—locally and nationally—that intentionally guide participants along a continuum of increasing intercultural competency with the goal of developing active world citizens. Programs developed may include short, loosely facilitated activities taking place inside or outside of hostels as well as longer programs that may include hostel stays as part of the curriculum. HI-USA will create one or more programs especially designed to present HI-USA as “a widely recognized champion for intercultural understanding” to the public at large.

Programming will utilize the principles of experiential learning: the concept from experience through facilitated reflection. This style of learning both appeals strongly to the 18-30 FIT constituency, while providing opportunities for great internalization of lessons through action and leadership development. Participants will learn tools for living the mission while staying engaged with the hostelling movement and with HI-USA and HI-USA will realize a Vision 2020 element to “be a valued source of experiential learning”.

Initiatives described below provide for development of direct learning opportunities on a local scale as well as on a national or international level.

A. Deliver Local Learning Experiences

HI-USA will develop organized activities in support of the organization's Global Ends Policy to develop active world citizens. HI-USA will promote learning by creating tools and developing and facilitating activities that arm participants with the skills and experiences they need to be active, civic-minded citizens who promote peace, sustainability, and intercultural understanding.

HI-USA will design activities for the broader community of travelers – those staying in the hostel as well as those who reside locally or engage virtually

Activities may include:

- Leadership skills workshops
- Lecture series
- Focused film festivals

This initiative will include opportunities for participant involvement in the development and roll out of activities described above, and will consider partnership opportunities with like-minded organizations.

¹⁸ As defined in HI-USA's Global Ends Policy (See Appendix B: HI-USA Strategic Framework).

B. Develop Signature Intensive Learning Programs

HI-USA has a long history of providing experiential educational programs that result in life-long connections and life-changing experiences. The trips, programs, and the subsequent educational programming developed over the years have inducted participants into the hostelling continuum and promoted the mission.

This initiative recognizes the significance of this history and seeks to develop a similar, updated experience more focused on our 18-30 year old FIT direction. A signature learning program will allow this initiative to be delivered nationally and it will create connections internationally. Given the complexity of such a program, HI-USA must conduct thorough research and business planning in order to determine how to best realize this initiative.

Examples of possible signature programs to research further include:

Gap Year

The Gap Year concept is both relevant and engaging to the 18-30 year old FIT. It has seen great success in other countries and presents HI-USA with an opportunity to both welcome “Gap Year” travelers from other countries and helps grow the concept domestically. HI-USA is in a unique position to host a variety of stay experiences, connect youth to community-based projects, and instill opportunities for reflection. This activity will create self-awareness among participants as they recognize their journey and their ability to impact their own environment. This program could be well suited for partnerships.

Cultural Immersion and Exchange

HI-USA will partner with other organizations to develop meaningful curriculum for structured programs involving participants from other countries. This activity could also include domestic cultural exchange.

Retreats and Conferences

Conferences and retreats can be structured and themed with a focus on fostering intercultural understanding. These events may vary in length and could utilize hostel overnights, partnerships, and community connections to develop itineraries and curriculum designed for specific localities.

Summary and Recommendations

This process was charged with developing *program* strategy. During the process *operational* issues were identified and will require planning and focus to assure program strategies are successful.

In particular, operational planning will be needed around strategies in:

- Human Resources: Hiring, training, onboarding, and managing staff who are ideal for fulfilling the program strategies described and fully engaged in HI-USA's mission.
- Technology: Creating and managing the technologies which will be the platforms for creating an e connective experience for customers, stakeholders, and staff while promoting HI-USA's mission and supporting operational needs.
- Advancement: Rebranding, linking programs and mission, messaging orienting stakeholders, marketing, and fund development.
- Volunteers: recruiting, engaging, orienting, leveraging.

These four areas are not merely operational, but rather essential to programmatic—and mission—success.

It is further recommended that in any implementation planning, attention is paid to under-served populations.

Attention to the operational needs, organizational strategy, external environments, and under-served populations will ensure success in the realization of the five program strategies and the growth of HI-USA's mission across the United States from present day into the future.

Appendix

A. Terminology Index for HI-USA Strategy

General

Mission

To help all, especially the young, gain a greater understanding of the world and its people through hostelling.

Ends Policy

Hostellers have intercultural understanding and are active world citizens

Program Service Areas

The three program service areas for HI-USA are: (1) *Hostels*, (2) *Educatio*, and (3) *Community*.

Program Strategies

High-level or general areas of focus that collectively allow HI-USA to achieve the Organizational Strategy.

Initiatives

A cohesive grouping of activities that describe the day-to-day work of the organization and allow it to carry out the various program strategies.

Hostelling Experience

An extended encounter between an individual and hostelling that potentially spans pre-trip preparations, the hostel stay(s) including travel, and post-trip engagement, and includes hostels, education, and community as influential elements.

Program Service Areas

Hostels

Buildings, staff, and operations that provide access and value (location, quality and rate) to travelers, and engage travelers and the community in a way that delivers HI-USA's mission and Ends Policy.

Related Terms:

Hostel Stay Experience

The ways in which individuals interact actively during their hostel visit. These include conversations in the common rooms, food preparation in the kitchen, sleeping in dormitory rooms, and participation in organized activities.

HI-USA's Hostel Network

Hostels across the US owned or licensed by HI-USA, commonly described as association and affiliate hostels.

Association Hostels

Hostels owned and operated by HI-USA (both through the National Office and/or Councils).

Affiliate Hostels

Hostels independently owned and licensed through HI-USA.

Education

Formal and informal education delivery, purposefully conceived, that engages travelers and the community in a way that delivers HI-USA's mission and Ends Policy.

Related Terms:

Formal Education

Typically delivered in a traditional (classroom-style) environment led by a trained staff person or volunteer with prepared content.

Informal Education

Flexibly delivered with an opportunity to infuse direct experiences into the learning environment and content.

Experiential Learning

The concept of learning from experience (from "doing") through facilitated reflection.

Community

Fostering connections among individual travelers, affiliation between travelers and HI-USA, and partnerships between HI-USA and community institutions, with the goal of building a group of individuals who value travel as a meaningful life experience.

Related Terms:

Connections take place primarily through hostels, education, and public engagement, on-line and off-line.

Affiliation is built primarily through formal and informal education, membership, and public engagement.

Partnerships are cultivated with mission-compatible organizations, non-profit and corporate, national and local.

Community of Travelers is a group of people whose personal identities are in part shaped by hostelling and other travel experiences.

Other Important Terms

Public Engagement

An organizational commitment to connect and partner with individuals and likeminded agencies, to help promote and assist people in moving along a continuum of affiliation with the hostelling experience (i.e., mission focused). Tools are both on-line and off-line, including formal and informal education, activities and events, and social media and marketing.

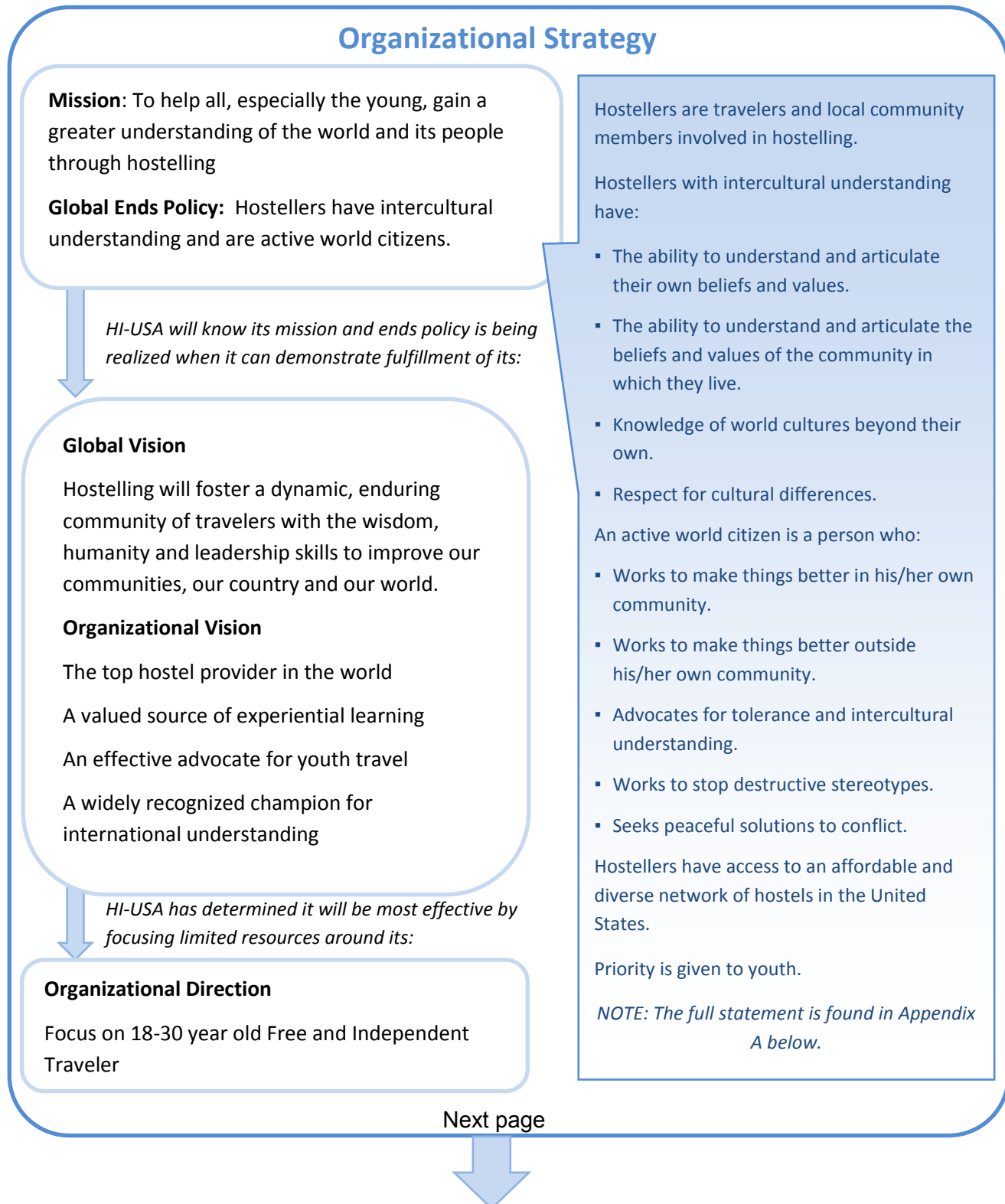
Internal Engagement

An organizational commitment to connect with staff and volunteers in a way that values their opinion and recognizes their contributions to HI-USA mission fulfillment (i.e., operations focused). Tools are both on-line and off-line, including in-person meetings, teleconferences, and web-based applications.

B. HI-USA Strategic Framework

July 2012

The following graphic describes the broad strategic framework HI-USA has created to guide its work. Note that all elements of HI-USA's Organizational Strategy have already been determined through board or CEO decision-making.





Program Strategy

HI-USA carries out its organizational directives by working through three program service areas:

Experiential Learning

Hostels

Community

Program strategies to guide this work have been developed through this process.

Program Strategy

Framework

The current process is considering program strategy at multiple levels.

Program Service Areas

HI-USA has decided to carry out its program work through three program service areas: Experiential Learning, Hostels, and Community. It is important to keep in mind that there is significant overlap among these three service areas. These three areas are set.

Program Strategies

The Program Strategy Committee, with input from the Resource Groups and Senior Leadership Team, has identified a framework for organizing the work of each service area, called program strategies. Program strategies are high-level or general areas of focus that collectively allow HI-USA to achieve the Organizational Strategy.

Initiatives

Each initiative is a cohesive grouping of activities that describe the day-to-day work of the organization and allow it to carry out the various program strategies. Several initiatives are described under each program strategy.

Outcomes and Goals

HI-USA is committed to creating a clear understanding of what it will accomplish by investing in each program and how it will measure success. To that end, each initiative will describe its desired outcome, or the change that will be achieved. The outcome will be accompanied by measurable goals that will describe success towards achieving the outcome.

Because this description is theoretical, it may be somewhat confusing. Concrete examples are helpful:

Program Strategy: **Enhance the Hostelling Experience**

Initiative: **Connecting Local Travelers**

Initiative Outcome: **Local communities of travelers engage with each other and HI-USA**

Community Program Goal: **TBD**

Making Recommendations

It is critically important to use criteria to guide development of and to prioritize programs. The Resource Groups will review the strategy screen (decision-making criteria) at the in-person meeting and use this tool to guide conversation about how to prioritize program options.

Strategy Screen

A strategy screen is a list of criteria used to guide decision-making. In addition to supporting intentional decision-making, the screen is a valuable planning tool, teasing out information needed to succeed and issues to address in implementing critical decisions. The strategy screen is used in the current strategy development process and is also a tool that can be used on an ongoing basis by HI-USA.

The strategy screen adopted by the HI-USA Transitional Board of Directors is below. It will be reviewed at the in-person Resource Group meetings and used to guide conversation about how to prioritize program options.

Is this decision:	
... the best way to achieve our organizational strategy?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mission ▪ Global Ends Policy ▪ Global Vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizational Vision ▪ Organizational Direction
...leveraging and/or building our competitive advantages?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mission-driven ▪ Quality facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community support and benefit ▪ Broad network
...consistent with our values?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaboration ▪ Communication ▪ Diversity of thought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrity ▪ Quality ▪ Respect
...made knowing that we have, or have access to needed human and financial resources?	
...a means to grow our financial resources, increase our social impact, and promote environmental sustainability?	
...include a definition of success that is measurable?	
...made considering external context and factors, opportunities, and threats?	
...taking account of what our mission-focused stakeholders including travellers/hostellers are looking for?	
...made by weighing whether we should build, borrow, or buy – is someone doing this better than we could?	

Competitive Advantage

The consideration of competitive advantage is a critical component of the strategy screen. HI-USA has identified four strengths that stand out as competitive advantages—strengths that differentiate HI-USA as different and better compared to other organizations in the field:

Mission-driven

HI-USA's nonprofit mission is to promote a greater understanding of the world, and the organization works to advance this understanding through the hostel experience. As a competitive advantage, the mission speaks directly to the way in which travelers are attracted to HI-USA's commitment to providing a hostel experience that goes beyond a bed for the night to include education, experiential learning, and cultural engagement and interaction. Education and community programs are a vital part of building competitive advantage and many HI-USA hostels are very good at involving travelers in these services. HI-USA's nonprofit status can also be leveraged to secure resources (grants, donations, etc.) that other for profit organizations in the field cannot.

Quality Facilities

Hostellers rate HI-USA facilities very high compared to others in terms of the quality of the facilities. This advantage attracts travelers and must also be sustained through continued strong operational management and capital investment.

Community Support and Benefit

Another mission-related competitive advantage, HI-USA attracts support from the community, is able to access prime locations others can't (such as locations in desirable national parks), and enhance the traveler's experience through connections to and interaction with local communities. Additionally, HI-USA attracts volunteers and donors as a critical organizational resource.

HI-USA's Broad Network

HI-USA has the largest hostel network in the United States. Hostels in the network are known and trusted to offer consistent quality and standards.

Appendix A: Ends Policy

The following Ends Policy was adopted by the HI-USA board of directors on April 10, 2011.

- 1.0 Hostellers have intercultural understanding and are active world citizens
 - 1.1 Hostellers are travelers and local community members involved in hostelling.
 - 1.1.1 Hostelling is educational travel, local and global, using hostels and/or programs to facilitate interaction among travelers, and with local communities.
 - 1.1.2 Travelers are people of any age who visit communities and places beyond the community where they live.
 - 1.1.3 Travelers and community members, in order to appreciate what is unique and common in the world, come from and travel to places that represent:
 - The diverse natural and built environments of the country
 - The diversity of the country including rural, small town, mid-size cities, large metropolitan/urban areas, and
 - Places of unique cultural heritage.
 - 1.2 Hostellers with intercultural understanding have:
 - 1.2.1 The ability to understand and articulate their own beliefs and values.
 - 1.2.2 The ability to understand and articulate the beliefs and values of the community in which they live.
 - 1.2.3 Knowledge of world cultures beyond their own.
 - 1.2.4 Respect for cultural differences.
 - 1.3 An active world citizen is a person who:
 - 1.3.1 Works to make things better in his/her own community.
 - 1.3.2 Works to make things better outside his/her own community.
 - 1.3.3 Advocates for tolerance and intercultural understanding.
 - 1.3.4 Works to stop destructive stereotypes.
 - 1.3.5 Seeks peaceful solutions to conflict.
 - 1.4 Hostellers have access to an affordable and diverse network of hostels in the United States.
 - 1.4.1 Hostels provide friendly, safe, and secure overnight accommodations and programming opportunities.
 - 1.4.2 Access is met by hostels being present in markets with sufficient demand with a balanced approach within the whole network that represents a diversity of culture, geography, community, and traveler experience.
 - 1.4.3 Affordability is met by accommodations rates that are valued by the individual traveler.
 - 1.4.4 The network represents a range of size, style and location of hostels to support travelers' choices in experiencing the richness and breadth of the natural, cultural and geographic diversity within the United States.
- 2.0 Priority is given to youth

The Hostelling Experience

Because enhancement of the hostelling experience is central to all HI-USA's programmatic work, the following excerpt from the (organizational) strategy development process is included here.

The organization's **hostelling experience** is the key thread that binds all HI-USA's work together, and is the touchstone for serving the primary audience. The hostelling experience encompasses the many experiences that promote cultural interaction and foster cultural competence by building a greater understanding of the world and its people. It is an extended encounter between an individual and hostelling that potentially spans trip preparations, the hostel stay including travel, and post-trip engagement. Hostels, education, and community are influential elements.

Hostels are what first come to mind when many think about hostels and hostelling. They include buildings, staff, and operations that provide access and value (location, quality, and rate) to travelers. At its simplest, the **hostel stay experience** is about an affordable night in a building that facilitates interaction among guests. HI-USA's expanded definition of the hostel stay experience includes participation in various activities. Particularly in large buildings, these offerings can be an important way to facilitate conversation and build relationships among guests, a process which seems easier in the more intimate environment of a smaller hostel.

The hostelling experience is an extended encounter between an individual and hostelling that potentially spans trip preparations, the hostel stay including travel, and post-trip engagement. The experience includes hostels, education, and community as influential elements.

Formal and informal **education** engages travelers and the community in a way that delivers the HI-USA mission and Ends Policy. **Community** building fosters connections among individual travelers, affiliation between travelers and HI-USA, and partnerships between HI-USA and community institutions. Education and community activities widen the audience to include both hostel guests and community members, which serves the mission in two ways: guests have the opportunity to learn about the community in which they are staying including from residents themselves, and community members can engage in unexpected relationships that enhance their understanding of the world—without leaving home. This is an important step towards creating an engaging and engaged **community of travelers** of people whose personal identities are in part shaped by hostelling and other travel experiences.

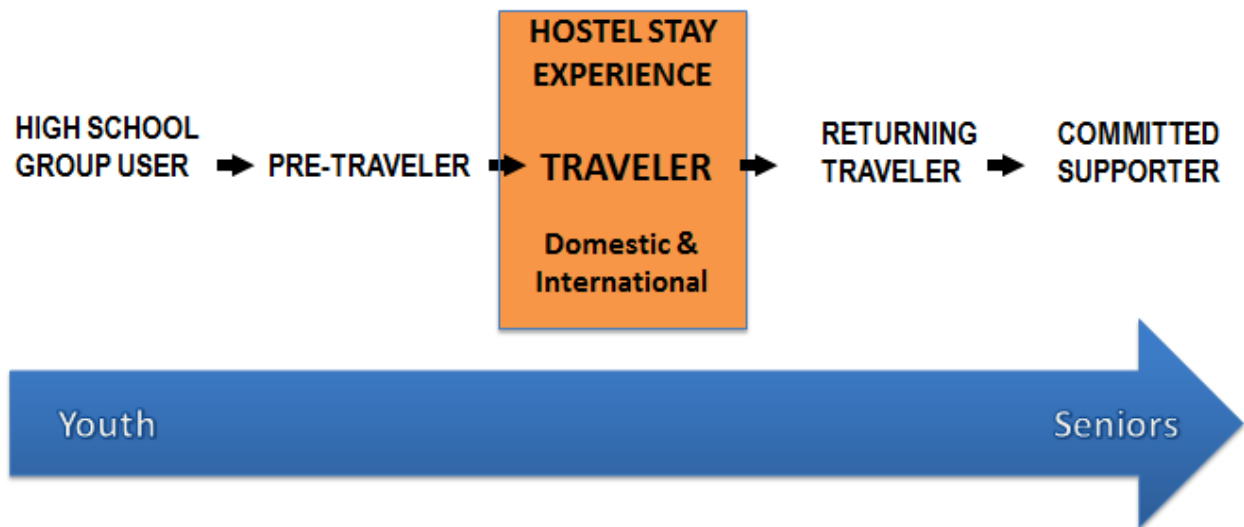
Although the focus is on the hostel stay experience, this does not mean that every organizational activity must take place in an HI-USA hostel or as part of a hostel stay. Many avid hostel supporters and hostellers live far from a hostel site, but may engage in activities that promote hostels and hostelling.

The continuum (Figure 1) envisions a life-long relationship with hostelling that is centered around the hostel stay experience. In the near term, the value of any particular hostel stay can be increased by focusing on the activity immediately before it (preparing for travel) and after it (settling back into a home-based environment). Outreach can be virtual through the web and web-based technologies or direct through on- or off-site gatherings, education, and community programs.

Pre-trip outreach to those who are contemplating hostel travel through travel education or orientation to travel helps set the stage for the pre-traveler to have a meaningful trip. Outreach to hostel users *while travelling* encourages maximum use of HI-USA facilities and community interaction programs and deeper connections to local communities. Outreach to *returning travelers*, such as social gatherings and volunteering opportunities, encourages travelers to reflect on their trips, helping to incorporate the travel lessons from the people, places, and cultures they experienced into their everyday lives.

By deepening HI-USA's relationship with those who use hostels, the organization lays the foundation for building a hostelling movement that engages and influences travelers no matter what stage of travel they are engaged in. Additionally, this clear focus on hostel experience drives planning and prioritizes every activity relating to the hostels and programs and interactions with the hostels that enhance the experience.

C. A Life Long Journey: A Traveler Continuum



D. HI-USA Program Strategy 2012 | Process/Timeline/Participants

HI-USA Program Strategy Process/Timeline

The strategy process began in January 2012 with the appointment of a Program Strategy Committee (PSC). Members of the PSC were selected by Russ Hedge from his Senior Leadership team and were tasked to develop a strategic plan for HI-USA programming which would achieve Vision 2020, HI-USA's Global Vision, Mission and Ends Policy. The process was to embrace six process values; collaboration, communications, diversity of thinking, integrity, quality and respect.

Once a process and timeline was set, the PSC reached out to all stakeholders to participate in the process by being a part of resource groups in one of three program service areas: Community, Education, or Hostels. Resource group members were selected by the PSC and CEO and were tasked to contribute to the development of program strategy throughout the duration of the process. They were comprised of mostly internal members, with some external members including a combination of staff from Council's, the National office, hostel management, and volunteers with the organization. The resource group members were contacted in the middle of February and informed of their appointments.

Concurrently a survey was sent out to all staff, board members, and volunteers connected to the organization to assess the opportunities and threats of the organization. The survey was completed by the middle of March and an analysis and summary was put together by La Piana staff (See Appendix; HI-USA Program Strategy Research 2012).

During the month of March the resource group members conducted research of organizations and the target market identified within the organizational strategy. They also interviewed a variety of organizations and individuals ranging from hotel management to international partner staff to staff of other companies and organizations with programs that are of interest to the target market. All of the research was intended to help generate ideas for potential initiatives that could accomplish the organizational strategy.

At the end of March the PSC met in Denver with staff from La Piana to put together the initial program strategies for each Program Service Area. Each area had different strategies with the exception of one strategy that was applicable to all three areas, Deepening the Hostelling Experience.

Before the in person meetings in April, the Community, Hostels, and Education resource groups were sent 3 information packets containing the results of the opportunities and threats survey, an overview of the research and interviews, the specific interviews and research documents, and a compilation of some of the organizations strengths.

The Community and Hostels resource groups met in person near the beginning to middle of April and the Education resource group met at the end of April to work on creating initiatives for each program strategy based on what they know of the organization and the information from the packets.

The PSC then worked on putting together the thoughts and ideas from the in person meetings into rough drafts of strategy in each program service area. In the middle of May the initial drafts of the strategies for the Education and Community groups were presented to the SLT for input and review. The strategies for the Hostels group were presented to the SLT at the in person meeting in May.

The PSC met in person to further clarify the strategies of each program service area before meeting with the full SLT in Washington, DC. At the in person SLT meeting, the strategies were reviewed more in depth and each program service area were discussed as well as begin the process of prioritizing the strategies of each program service area.

After the SLT discussions and meeting in May the PSC and the consultant from La Piana combined the strategies and programs from each program service area to create a more integrated and cohesive document. The result was five strategies with initiatives from each program service area within each strategy.

At the end of June the PSC and SLT met in Boston to discuss/review the updated and revised strategies. Also part of the discussion were specific decisions on the hostel growth strategy and structured learning programs strategy. The SLT also began to make more concrete prioritization of the strategies.

In the beginning of July the PSC proposed to the CEO to extend the strategy process by one month to ensure that the new strategies and guiding document are cohesive, clear, and presented in the best way possible.

Through July and August the PSC put together a more refined and cohesive rough draft of the proposed Strategy Document. The document went through review by the PSC, Resource Groups, SLT, and CEO before being presented to the CEO at the beginning of September.

Role of the Resource Groups

The resource groups were an integral role of the strategy process. The groups were made up of mainly internal members to ensure that all parts of the country and the organization have a voice in the direction of the unified organization and the strategies to achieve the organizational vision. All of the resource groups helped to bring some clarity to the definitions of each program service areas. They also assisted in modifying and solidifying the specific program strategies within each service area while meeting in person and discussing their ideas on conference calls. For example, in the hostels resource group, the group members helped to create completely different strategies than when they first met and began discussing the program strategies. The resource groups continued to be vital throughout the entire process by providing input and suggestions for the combined strategies.

HI-USA Program Strategy 2012 Participants

Program Strategy Committee

- Danielle Brumfit; Executive Director HI-USA Golden Gate Council; Strategy Manager
- Deborah Ruhe; Executive Director HI-USA Eastern New England Council; (Education)
- Sue Schaffner; Executive Director HI-USA San Diego Council; (Community)
- Aaron Chaffee; Director of Hostels, HI-USA; (Hostels)
- Vicki Larkowich; HI-USA Strategy Assistant

Community Resource Group Members

- Chris Bauman; GM HI-Point Montara Lighthouse
- Nancy Clarke; Board Member; Central & Southern Ohio
- Ari Joseph; Community Engagement Manager, HI-New York
- Roseanne Landay; Board Member, HI-USA Transition Board
- Danny Marx; Engagement Manager, HI-USA
- Molly Mitoma; Marketing Manager, HI-USA Golden Gate Council
- Arielle Semmel; Educational Programs Coordinator, HI-USA
- Barbara Wein; Senior Advisor, HI-USA

Education Resource Group

- Stuart Bousel; Office/Benefits Manager, HI-USA Golden Gate Council
- Matt Carney; Programs and Volunteer Coordinator , HI-USA San Diego Council
- Britta Dietrich; CO-Owner, HI-Portland Northwest
- Megan Johnson; Engagement Manager, Central Region, HI-USA
- Chris Kloth; Board Member, HI-USA Transition Board
- Tricia Melnik; Executive Director, HI-USA Oregon Council
- Dr. Vinod Sasidharan; Professor, San Diego State Recreation and Tourism Management Program

Hostels Resource Group

- Javier Bujanda; Director Operations/Finance, HI-USA Golden Gate Council
- Terri Fisher; Board Member, HI-USA Central California Council
- Peter Jenkel; Former HI-USA & Chicago Council
- Jim Kennet; Co-Owner, HI-USA Portland Northwest
- Josh Lichtman; Community Volunteer, HI-USA San Diego Council
- Kat Morgan; Education & Training, HI-USA
- Dean Papademetriou; Board Member, HI-USA Eastern New England Council
- Molly Salyer; GM, HI-Marin Headlands
- Mark Schneider; GM, HI-DC
- Scott Shapiro; Owner, HI-Seattle
- Shelbey Sy; Marketing Director, HI-Canada

Consulting Assistance;

- Lester Olmstead-Rose, La Piana Consulting
-

E. HI-USA Program Strategy 2012 | Overview of Survey, Research, and Interviews

HI-USA Community Research Group | Survey Results

On March 12, 2012, an online survey was broadly distributed to HI-USA stakeholders to solicit diverse perspectives on the opportunities and threats that should be considered in developing programmatic strategies in the areas of Community, Education, and Hostels.

Of the 94 individuals who completed the survey, 18 identified Community as their area of primary interest, and three of these identified themselves as Community-building Staff.

Top **Opportunities** for Community (in order of frequency):

- Leverage community assets and build goodwill
- Increase awareness of HI-USA and its mission
- Connect with travelers at hostel and after return
- Engage partners (especially colleges)
- Position HI-USA as an expert resource in travel

Top **Threats** for Community (in order of frequency)

- Lacking the people power or other resources to do it
- Undervaluing or shifting away from local strengths
- Not having a clear picture of needs or interests
- Poor perception or lack of knowledge about hostels
- Competition from other hostels, travel industry

Overall, opportunities focused on: creating connections among local communities, community members, hostellers, and the hostel itself; engaging partners; and improving HI-USA's market position. Threats focused on: clarity of needs and goals; aligning resources and staffing to achieve them, and market competition.

In comments about both the opportunities and threats facing the Community program area, survey respondents highlighted the importance of *being good listeners* to understand and effectively respond to hostellers' and communities' needs.

Cross-program Opportunities echoed some of the opportunities already cited above, including creating connections, partnering, and marketing. Additional opportunities involving Community included:

- Leverage hostels as the location and focus for integrated, mission-centered programming
- Use unification to develop and disseminate best practices for effectiveness and efficiency
- Capitalize on the uniqueness of different hostels while balancing the need for consistent standards and shared best practices

What do we all need to know?

- Respondents from all three program areas cited the need to better define the program area of Community so that there is shared understanding of its role and its value.
- All respondents indicated interest in learning what each of the three groups are doing (particularly what their mission-driven strategies will be) so that they can work together.

HI-USA Community Research Group | Interview Results

In March 2012, Resource Group members conducted interviews with representatives of a number of organizations and programs thought to be able to offer valuable perspectives to inform programmatic strategies for Community. Nine interviews were completed by March 31.

On the whole, interviews corroborated survey findings, including the importance of: effectively engaging communities and travelers; partnering with others to provide programming; having clear goals, and more effectively marketing HI-USA in an increasingly competitive landscape.

Effectively engaging communities and travelers included advice for engaging 18-30 year olds as well as building community overall:

- Involve those you want to engage in planning the program, give them ownership
- Identify your best customers and promoters, and focus on meeting their needs
- Create experiences that are highly “sharable” using social media
- Well-designed in-person engagement can be extremely effective

Partnering included suggestions to:

- Look to colleges as key partners for reaching young audiences
- Leverage the expertise and resources of others to do what you can’t do alone

Clarity of goals included the advice to:

- Use performance metrics to track whether you are achieving your stated goals
- Focus your resources wisely, embrace change, learn from mistakes, and adapt quickly

Marketing HI-USA included suggestions to:

- Consider the importance of first impressions, both in customer service and facilities
- Meet customer needs for up-to-date technology and facilities (noting that 19-30s are defined by technology and also demonstrate a strong affinity for design)
- Be prepared to state (and prove) your value proposition, which may end up changing as you engage community in new ways
- Clarify your brand position in terms of what you stand for (e.g., think about being a good corporate citizen as the parallel to the good global citizen you’re trying to nurture)

Other highlights included:

- HI-USA has a built-in advantage in its hostels, which have community spaces that should be fully leveraged as such
- Parents are still key decision-makers in their older children’s lives, and need to be considered in “selling” the idea of travel and the hostelling experience
- The website and a continual stream of quality content are fundamental to social media, and while the specific tools change daily, mobile platforms are increasingly prevalent
- The new 24/7 connectivity demands a higher level of customer service, responsiveness, and a lot of hard work

HI-USA Community Research Group | Research Results

Resource Group members shared a number of reports, articles, and websites highlighting insights into the 18-30 travel market and how other organizations and programs are using online and/or offline community building strategies. Additional reports were suggested by the consultants, also focusing on the 18-30 target market, travel, technology use, and attitudes about community.

Below are just a few highlights:

Understanding the target market (18-30)

- This age group is characterized by its diversity and is constantly changing – as such, it is dangerous to over-generalize about “Millennials” or think we have them “figured out”
- That said, there are common experiences and behaviors that apply – i.e. this generation is defined by: 1) technology and 2) friends
- Despite nuances in technology and social media use in different cultures, this age group has aggressively adopted technology and continues to shape its use
- These young people are market-savvy and more likely to turn to their peer group for information than to trust formal media, brands, or other sources of “authority”
- Despite global economic disruption, this age group continues to represent a promising market of travel customers

Building community

- Millennials value community, and the “team” dynamic is in many ways central to their experience – but it is important to understand that they tend to define themselves by their affiliations (“I am the sum of who/what I connect to”), rather than the other way around (“I ‘belong to’ X or Y”)
- Facebook and Twitter are the two “giants” of global social media (with some exceptions, such as China), and mobile platforms dominate the landscape, particularly for 18-30s
- Social media is not just about having “virtual” experiences – it’s much more a way to “broadcast” real-life experiences – suggesting that in-person activities and engagement are central to a successful community building strategy
- Millennials may be less likely to distinguish strong lines between online and offline community – for example, they may be texting one another from across the room!
- Empowering a community to shape their own experience – whether online or offline – means giving up some control and entering into uncertain territory; this requires grace under pressure, adaptability, and often a sense of humor on the part of organizations

Other

- Because Millennials identify themselves by the people, activities, and brands with which they associate, it is important for brands to “stand for” something – Millennials are looking for a connection to social-conscious causes; they are also looking for fun and interesting
- Millennials value experience, and want to share them with others – both physically and virtually – “shareability” on social networks means interesting photo/video ops and unique mini-experiences that work well as status updates
- Especially as they leave college and face a dismal job market and student loan debt, Millennials are value-conscious (note: this is different from cost-conscious, as they are not just looking for the lowest price)

HI-USA Education Research Group | Survey Results

On March 12, 2012, an online survey was broadly distributed to HI-USA stakeholders to solicit diverse perspectives on the opportunities and threats that should be considered in developing programmatic strategies in the areas of Community, Education, and Hostels.

Of the 94 individuals who completed the survey, 17 identified Education as their area of primary interest, and six of these identified themselves as Education Staff.

Top **Opportunities** for Education (in order of frequency):

- Build on our existing successful models
- Partner with others (including colleges)
- Take education programming online
- Focus on achieving the HI-USA mission
- Leverage the hostels as a unique asset

Top **Threats** for Education (in order of frequency)

- Lack of support (will, staffing, resources)
- Not familiar with how to engage 18-30 age group
- How to ensure quality and relevance
- Not partnering effectively enough

Overall, opportunities focused on building on existing strengths in Education to serve the target age group and partnering with others to do so. Threats focused on the same issues, including the risk of not successfully engaging 18-30s or not leveraging partnerships effectively. Responses also spoke to the importance of keeping or updating what works while also being open to and trying new things.

Cross-program Opportunities echoed some of the opportunities cited above, including partnering with others to develop and offer age-appropriate programs and leveraging hostels as the locus for delivering those programs. Additional opportunities involving Education included:

- Using unification to formalize, streamline, and share best practices
- Engaging communities as partners in delivering programs and making hostels a vibrant place for learning
- Creating programs that engage 18-30 year olds, and that link directly to overnight stays
- Marketing the value of hostels, specifically HI-USA and its mission

What do we all need to know?

Respondents from the two other program areas indicated the desire to know more about what Education will look like for this target age group, how programs will be developed, and how their success will be measured.

Respondents identifying Education as their primary interest wanted colleagues from the other two areas to understand that experiences that are designed and facilitated allow a kind of learning that can't be achieved by informal interactions alone, and encouraged them to experience Education programming first-hand to better understand its value.

Respondents from all areas indicated interest in learning what each of the three groups are doing (mission-driven goals and strategies) and how resources will be allocated.

HI-USA Education Research Group | Interview Results

In March and April 2012, Resource Group members conducted interviews with representatives of a number of organizations and programs thought to be able to offer valuable perspectives to inform programmatic strategies for Education. Eleven interviews were completed.

Interviews corroborated some survey findings, including the importance of: more effectively marketing hostels; learning to engage 18-30 year olds by asking them directly about their needs and preferences; partnering with colleges, universities, and other groups with which young people are already associated; and being creative in developing programs that offer a unique experience to deliver greatest educational value.

These and other key themes from the interviews included:

Get to know the 18-30 demographic

- Talk to them to find out what they really want from service-based and other educational travel experiences
- It is difficult to get young people, particularly busy students, to actually “show up” for programs and events, even when they initially express interest in them

Look to partnerships

- Campus-based travel clubs and coordinators are interested in resources, programs, and packages they can offer students, but often don’t think of hostels
- Group travel, itinerary packages, and Spring Break-based programs are among those services these partners are looking for
- Consider how to provide complementary programs and services, rather than trying to directly compete with other programs and organizations

Good design is critical, and may be a competitive advantage

- Experiential travel is at its best when the experience is unique and memorable, and when it bridges the values of the participants and the organization (e.g., service, “green” practices, sustainability, etc.)
- Every detail of the experience is important, from how you get there, to what you do when you get there, to how you do it
- Other hostels have not created intentional learning programs beyond things like group tours or exchange programs, and they look to HI-USA to see what it will develop

Good execution depends on human and financial resources

- Having dedicated program/education staff at the hostels is important for success
- Government funding subsidizes youth exchanges and similar programs at overseas hostels – it is important to explore whether similar revenue streams may be available to HI-USA

Other observations included:

- It’s not just about good content, well-delivered –“fun” and “style points” do matter
 - Nonprofit ideals like sustainability, accessibility, environmental stewardship, etc. can be business-friendly
 - HI-USA needs to more effectively educate potential partners and the broader market about hostels, hostelling, and its own mission, brand, and value proposition
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HI-USA Education Research Group | Research Results

Resource Group members shared reports, statistics, articles, and websites highlighting: the value of travel as a learning experience, especially for the 18-30 age group; structures for delivering those experiences, including gap year travel; and volunteerism, both in delivering programs and *as* program. Additional reports were suggested by the consultants, also focusing on the 18-30 target market, travel, technology use, and attitudes about community.

Below are just a few highlights:

Understanding the target market (18-30)

- This age group is characterized by its diversity and is constantly changing – as such, it is dangerous to over-generalize about “Millennials” or think we have them “figured out”
- That said, there are common experiences and behaviors that apply – i.e. this generation is defined by: 1) technology and 2) friends
- Despite global economic disruption, this age group continues to represent a promising market of travel customers
- Because Millennials identify themselves by the people, activities, and brands with which they associate, it is important for brands to “stand for” something – Millennials are looking for a connection to social-conscious causes; they are also looking for fun and interesting
- Millennials value experience, and want to share them with others – both physically and virtually – “shareability” on social networks means interesting photo/video ops and unique mini-experiences that work well as status updates

Experiential or Service Learning and Travel

- Three key reasons for youth travel are: education, voluntourism, and religious or identity travel. Youth often travel in groups for these reasons.
- Experiential travel and responsible/sustainable travel are two growing trends attracting younger travelers
- Experiential education at the college or university level is still relatively new in the U.S., and there is a lot of lessons to learn and improvements to be made
- Experiential and service-learning can be used to achieve numerous different goals – it is important to design the curriculum to effectively meet those goals
- Youth exchanges are used by overseas hostels as a primary way of engaging young travelers, as are other group experiences
- The gap year, bridge year, or year abroad, is a concept that is beginning to gain momentum in the U.S., which may be an outstanding opportunity for HI-USA
- Evaluating the results of HI-USA’s programs in this area will be critical for ongoing improvement, generating funding support and partner participation, and ensuring stakeholders that the organization’s mission is being advanced

Other

- For interpersonal contact to effectively reduce prejudice between diverse group members, certain conditions must be present. Casual interaction alone is not enough, and can in fact reinforce prejudice. We must *facilitate* meaningful interaction to foster greater understanding

HI-USA Hostels Research Group | Survey Results

On March 12, 2012, an online survey was broadly distributed to HI-USA stakeholders to solicit diverse perspectives on the opportunities and threats that should be considered in developing programmatic strategies in the areas of Community, Education, and Hostels.

Of the 94 individuals who completed the survey, 59 identified Hostels as their area of primary interest. Thirty-four identified themselves as Hostel Managers, Hostel Staff, or Affiliate Hostel Owners.

Top **Opportunities** for Hostels (in order of frequency):

- Strengthen competitive position in the market
- Expand the HI-USA hostel network
- Achieve excellence and efficiencies with unification
- Promote HI-USA and its mission
- Engage the 18-30 year old market

Top **Threats** for Hostels (in order of frequency)

- Competition from more fun, well-heeled options
- Disconnected management, priorities, decision-making
- Poor perception of hostels in the marketplace
- Lack of resources (especially maintenance)
- Failing to acknowledge and support diversity of hostels

Overall, opportunities focused on: appealing to 18-30 year old travelers, marketing HI-USA hostels more effectively, and capitalizing on existing infrastructure and unification to grow the hostel network. Threats focused on: the marketing challenge, failure to meet or keep up with traveler expectations of facilities and services, and the risk of losing hostels' individuality.

Cross-program Opportunities echoed some of the opportunities already cited above, including marketing as well as using unification to disseminate best practices while continuing to maintain the uniqueness of different hostels. Additional opportunities involving Hostels included:

- Leverage hostels as the location and focus for integrated, mission-centered programming
- Involve hostels in connecting hostellers with local travelers and in connecting hostels with the community
- Engage partners in developing and delivering a more vibrant hostel experience
- Create programs that engage 18-30 year olds, and that link directly to overnight stays

What do we all need to know?

- Respondents from the two other program areas indicated the desire to know more about how the hostels really work on a day-to-day basis and what hostellers need and want.
- Many respondents identifying Hostels as their primary interest cited the need for all three program areas to work in a clear and coordinated fashion; that said, some expressed the opinion that Hostels should be considered the most important of the three areas.
- Respondents from all areas indicated interest in learning what each of the three groups are doing (mission-driven goals and strategies) and how resources will be allocated.

HI-USA Hostels Research Group | Interview Results

In March 2012, Resource Group members conducted interviews with representatives of a number of organizations and programs thought to be able to offer valuable perspectives to inform programmatic strategies for Hostels. Five interviews were completed by March 31.

Interviews corroborated some survey findings, including the importance of: more effectively marketing hostels; engaging communities and travelers; and learning to engage 18-30 year olds to attract their business in an increasingly competitive landscape.

These and other key themes from the interviews included:

Get to know your customers (emphasizing the 18-30 demographic)

- Talk to them to find out what they really want
- Hire staff who are of that age group and can bring new energy to the hostel experience

The experience is everything

- Customers are looking for authentic, interesting, sharable experiences
- Facilities need to be up-to-date, attractive, and technology ready, but need not include high-end amenities
- Customer service is critical – be innovative, always evolving a better experience for your customers

Expansion considerations include growing via affiliates and gateway city placement

- Growing via affiliates demands attention to debt financing solutions, what it means to be an affiliate (i.e. what is the mutual benefit), and consistency across the network
- Gateway cities are ripe locations for future development

Marketing HI-USA in an increasingly competitive market is important

- Technology has changed how customers access information about their lodging options, and personal testimonies/referrals now trump “official” ratings and brand standards

Other observations included:

- Pay attention to transportation options when seeking to develop hostel-to-hostel travel
 - On site or access to local bars is important to this demographic
 - Consistency of quality experience is important to have across the HI-USA network, but it is equally important to provide “interesting” and authentic experiences
 - HI-USA has a long history to sell as a strength, but does its brand longevity translate to a demographic that is looking for something new and exciting?
 - Create connections with the local community, and by making hostels social media savvy
-

HI-USA Hostels Research Group | Research Results

Resource Group members shared reports, statistics, articles, and websites highlighting insights into the 18-30 travel market, the hostelling market, and how other organizations and programs are providing travel accommodations to this market. Additional reports were suggested by the consultants, also focusing on the 18-30 target market, travel, technology use, and attitudes about community.

Below are just a few highlights:

Understanding the target market (18-30)

- This age group is characterized by its diversity and is constantly changing – as such, it is dangerous to over-generalize about “Millennials” or think we have them “figured out”
- That said, there are common experiences and behaviors that apply – i.e. this generation is defined by: 1) technology and 2) friends
 - Despite nuances in technology and social media use in different cultures, this age group has aggressively adopted technology and continues to shape its use
 - These young people are market-savvy and more likely to turn to their peer group for information than to trust formal media, brands, or other sources of “authority”
- Despite global economic disruption, this age group continues to represent a promising market of travel customers
- Especially as they leave college and face a dismal job market and student loan debt, Millennials are value-conscious (note: this is different from cost-conscious, as they are not just looking for the lowest price)
- Because Millennials identify themselves by the people, activities, and brands with which they associate, it is important for brands to “stand for” something – Millennials are looking for a connection to social-conscious causes; they are also looking for fun and interesting
- Millennials value experience, and want to share them with others – both physically and virtually – “sharability” on social networks means interesting photo/video ops and unique mini-experiences that work well as status updates

Travel trends

- Three key reasons for youth travel are: education, voluntourism, and religious or identity travel. Youth often travel in groups for these reasons.
- Safety is also a compelling reason why young people (especially women) may pursue group travel and/or choose hostel settings where there are community spaces as well as private rooms
- Experiential travel and responsible/sustainable travel are two growing trends attracting younger travelers

Other

- For interpersonal contact to effectively reduce prejudice between diverse group members, certain conditions must be present. Casual interaction alone is not enough, and can in fact reinforce prejudice. We must *facilitate* meaningful interaction to foster greater understanding
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F. Strategy in Relation to Fund Development, Marketing, and Engagement

The five strategies outlined in this document set a clear path for HI-USA towards a unified and dynamic hostelling organization with a clear focus on mission. Strategies will be incorporated operationally and have been impacted by feedback from a variety of perspectives. In addition, the strategies have been affected by the areas of marketing, fund development and engagement. The following excerpt draws on a high end analysis provided by these departments in HI-USA.

The analysis is not meant to be a final and comprehensive one, it is meant to further deepen the understanding of strategic impact on the organization in these areas. Leaders¹⁹ in each of these three areas were interviewed and summaries on their answers can be found below.

1. With your familiarity around the emerging program strategies, where do you feel we have the greatest potential for fund development, marketing, and engagement?

Fund Development

Funders support activities which

- make an important difference in an area they care about
- assist an underserved community
- demonstrate innovative ways to achieve mission
- advance new ways of thinking
- gain visibility for the funder (the latter being particularly true for corporate marketing deals but also the case with some individual donors).

I'm sure there are other things that are important to funders, but these are the things in my past experience that attract them.

Activities that serve a particular community and advance our mission and vision will attract prospective funders. Programs such as Facilitated Learning Opportunities and Advance Youth Travel by Mobilizing and Empowering the Community of Travelers are two that stand out. If the programs have specific guidelines and methods for establishing success they will be easier to use for growing our fund development.

Marketing

Having clear program strategies along with a defined target market creates a good foundation for more focused marketing and organizational outreach throughout the country. There are two areas that provide the greatest potential. First, within the first two strategies of Deepening the Hostelling Experience and Enrich the Hostel Stay, building and maintaining a network of quality hostels allows us to build connections to travelers and have good in-market advocates. Second, with Facilitated Learning Opportunities, we can position ourselves to have a strong visibility as an organization in providing mission focused high-impact programs.

Engagement

The greatest opportunity for engagement is in Deepen the Hostelling Experience and Facilitated Learning Opportunities. If we clearly define who we are, what we are asking people to engage in, and make it attractive then people will be more likely to want to engage. These two strategies provide the greatest potential for accomplishing that.

¹⁹ Interviewees; Fund Development; Greg Coble, SVP Finance & Administration/ Marketing; Mark Vidalin, HI-USA Director of Marketing/ Engagement; Danny Marx, National Engagement Manager

- 2. Are there any vulnerabilities within fund development, marketing, or engagement if we move forward with one of these program strategies?**

Fund Development

There are three areas that have vulnerabilities within strategy. First, with Facilitated Learning Opportunities, to be successful we would need to have a focused effort on higher level programs on a larger scale with more depth. We would also need a more recognized brand. Second, with Advance Youth Travel by Mobilizing and Empowering the Community of Travelers, we do not have appropriate staff or support in our current unified staffing structure. Third, with Capacity Growth, we do not currently have the financial resources to support growth through new hostel development.

Marketing

Our greatest vulnerability is if we don't start with our core activity of hostels and build from there. The marketing message should be kept in line with that core activity and try not to be all things to everyone. This will also help us stay proactive with competition and set us up to bring the competition under HI if we can establish a strong brand.

Engagement

The program strategies themselves do not seem to have any vulnerabilities within them in terms of engagement. The biggest challenge, which could be seen as a vulnerability will be clearly defining the understanding of what we are asking people to engage in both internally and externally.

- 3. Strictly from the fund development, marketing, and engagement perspective, what area would you like to see prioritized and why? If we prioritized as you suggest, what would be our most important implementation steps (don't get too detailed, just begin to think about staffing or resource needs or major milestones)**

Fund Development

Two areas to prioritize are foundations and corporate sponsorship. If we have staff dedicated to writing proposals and building relationships we can attract a variety of foundations based on our mission and vision. Corporate sponsorships can help bring us National visibility and can fit with our target market. These two areas will need dedicated staff to be successful for our fund development. The advancement division will need the right person leading it to be successful. We will also need accountability across the whole organization.

Marketing

Focusing on creating excellent hostels and a quality hostel stay experience is a priority for the marketing message and program execution. Implementation steps would depend on unification and developing an organization that can maintain best practices and also be creative in how we market all aspects of the organization. It needs to be a mix of central oversight in terms of messaging while also providing local flexibility.

Engagement

In terms of engagement, the best way to prioritize is to not silo between "departments" and different areas of the organization. For engagement to be successful with the strategies, both internally and externally, a concentrated effort needs to be made to all work together to engage the community in a clearly defined manner. This can be done by providing examples of how people can engage, providing a benefit to them and the organization, providing a variety of methods of engagement (online and offline), providing a distinct and recognizable "totem," and encourage them to act.

- 4. Out of the proposed program strategies, where do you see how we are doing things differently? In these cases what impact do you see strategy having in our current approach to fund development, marketing, and engagement?**

Fund Development

The proposed strategies require us to be more intentional and focused with programs in the future. The engagement required to be successful with Deepening the Hostelling Experience will mean a shift in the mindset of the entire organization. Within that strategy properly packaged Introductory Travel Programs has the potential for building fund development. Setting and meeting guest expectations within Enrich the Hostel Stay has potential for building our corporate sponsorship because different sponsors might be attracted to different hostel categories. Facilitated Learning Opportunities has a lot of potential as long as the programs outlined are specific and have depth. Advocacy is a new direction for the organization and has potential with specialized foundations and individual donors.

Marketing

Having a focused approach to our organizational programs will help in direct our marketing approach and be more efficient. The strategies should be used as pillars to shape our marketing. This will help to create a stronger, creative, unified approach to marketing.

Engagement

It is imperative to remember out that as HI-USA approaches and looks to adopt the 5 powerful strategies outlined in the New Program Strategy, significant attention and utmost priority has to be given to understanding that while each of these individual strategies are powerful, the key to overall success is our ability to understand that none of our effort can be silo'd. Each tactic is part of our overall attempt to foster a dynamic, enduring community of travelers with the wisdom, humanity, and leadership skills to improve our communities, our country and our world. No matter which individual strategy or tactic is being used, they are all methods of engagement and as a united HI-USA we must break out of our comfortable molds and practices, unite behind a bigger vision of engagement, and be willing to realize we are not all our own bosses or in charge of our own success. We can (and must) work together to better the opportunity and chances that as a whole we are as successful in realizing the mission of HI-USA as possible.
