



SILICON VALLEY COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS

Strategic Framework

Introduction

What is SVCN's Strategic Framework?

Welcome to Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits' (SVCN) Strategic Framework.

This Strategic Framework articulates SVCN's identity, worldview, and broad purpose as a change-making organization as it seeks to have impact in a constantly changing context. The Strategic Framework is different from a traditional linear strategic plan oriented around three to five-year goals and is intended to serve as a north star as SVCN allocates its resources in line with its mission as it engages with its wider environment. The Framework will be translated into concrete, actionable, and measurable priorities in SVCN's ongoing annual planning, staff OKRs, and work planning.

The rapid planning cycles afforded by this approach offer enough flexibility to support SVCN in adapting to an ever-changing context yet enough focus to help SVCN define success, move the needle, document impact, and avoid mission-creep.

The Framework is intended to be a living and enduring document, to be revisited and updated periodically. SVCN has also developed a decision screen to aid in priority-setting and in making ad hoc decisions about whether to engage in new programming or a change in scope of programming.

How is SVCN's Strategic Framework grounded in SVCN's history?

SVCN was founded in 1996 as a coalition of nonprofits working to address the root causes of the problems and needs of county residents, by strengthening nonprofit organizations and ensuring that they had a seat at planning and policy-making tables. Rooted in this history, SVCN has turned ever more of its attention, as an organization and an alliance of nonprofits, to systemic inequities.

SVCN's focus on equity seeks to address Silicon Valley's deep and persistent—and growing—economic and racial disparities that carry devastating consequences to Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Nonprofit organizations have a responsibility and opportunity to work with our communities to fight systemic racism in our organizations and in our governmental, philanthropic, and private sector partners. These inequities are rooted in racist and discriminatory legal and institutional structures—historic and current—as well as in the racial biases that still exist in our families, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. These and similar structures and systems of oppression also disadvantage indigenous people, immigrants and other people of color, women, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ community; these structures and systems of oppression have compounded negative effects for Black lives.

How is SVCN's Strategic Framework grounded in SVCN's history?

Our efforts to address inequities in our community redoubled when the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the structural racism embedded in so many systems and institutions and accelerated after witnessing the murder of George Floyd. At SVCN, we responded by heeding the voices of those disproportionately harmed and calling on our local nonprofit ecosystem to work collectively to fix the most pervasive areas of inequity.

How was SVCN's Strategic Framework developed?

In line with SVCN's commitment to racial justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, this process was designed to be highly inclusive, grounded in information and participation from members and the nonprofit community, staff, and Board.

As a nonprofit association, incorporating feedback and perspectives from local nonprofits, particularly members, is of utmost importance in all that SVCN does; thus, seeking this feedback is an ongoing process for SVCN. Existing data was leveraged to inform the strategy formation process, including results of the annual membership survey and regular pulse-checks on a variety of topics.

In addition to the Board and the staff, SVCN has three advisory bodies that were highly involved throughout the process. The Policy Council is a cross-section of the nonprofit community that advises SVCN on its policy advocacy; the Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Committee that is comprised of community and nonprofit leaders with particular expertise and/or lived experience pertaining to racial equity; and the Strategic Planning Committee comprised of representation from the Board of Directors, SVCN staff, Policy Council, and REDI Committee members.

Every person on each of these committees and every Board or staff member either participated on the Strategic Planning Committee or were individually interviewed to inform the process and had the opportunity to weigh in on the framework before it was finalized. The Strategic Planning committee had the additional responsibility of being a thought partner to generate content for the plan and participating in a full-day retreat pertaining to the plan.

What are SVCN'S vision, mission, and priority population?

Vision

Nonprofit organizations in Santa Clara County thrive and work sustainably in alliance as change agents advancing racial justice and equity throughout the sector and the communities we serve.

Mission

To advance the role, voice, and capacity of the nonprofit community so it can be a force for positive social change and support the creation of equitable, vibrant, and thriving communities.

Priority Population

SVCN prioritizes our content and programming for the nonprofit community located in or serving Santa Clara County. SVCN also strives to make our programming accessible to small, BIPOC-led nonprofits and nonprofits that are sharing power with the communities they serve.

SVCN's Values

Racial Justice

We believe in leading with racial equity to dismantle white supremacy and advance liberation and healing for and with those most impacted by historic systems of oppression. We seek opportunities to lift up the voices of those with lived experience and cede power to those most impacted, in the context of our work serving the local nonprofit ecosystem. We work to stay aware of and intentional about privilege, access, and positional power, within our organization, the local nonprofit ecosystem, and the larger community. We commit to action for racial justice.

In Service

We are responsive and flexible, so that we can meet nonprofits and nonprofit leaders where they are. We are proactive in seeking input from nonprofits about the direction of SVCN and our yearly priorities.

Humility + Accountability

We hold a growth mindset in all we do, prioritizing self-reflection and evolution as we stay receptive to the nonprofit sector and the communities they serve in order to be a better support to them in turn. We recognize that democratic societies rely on transparent, ethical, and accountable institutions and people.

Collective Solutions

We see SVCN as one participant in a movement to transform oppressive systems, structures, and the outcomes they produce at the community level. We believe we are stronger together and commit to integrity and accountability in our interactions with others as a foundation to support our collective work and impact. We also recognize and embrace our unique role in supporting, facilitating, convening, and leading nonprofits in participating in collective action, as appropriate.

Advocacy

Though advocacy can be an action, we value it as a way of being. We show up with an advocacy mindset by intentionally creating access and supporting community members to stand with their own power as we together challenge decision makers to be responsive and accountable to community voice and needs.

What are SVCN's strategic pillars, non-negotiables, and commitments?

SVCN focuses our attention on four key strategic aspects of our work that are critical in our mission to elevate the role, voice, and capacity of the local nonprofit ecosystem so it can be a force for social change and support the creation of equitable and thriving communities.

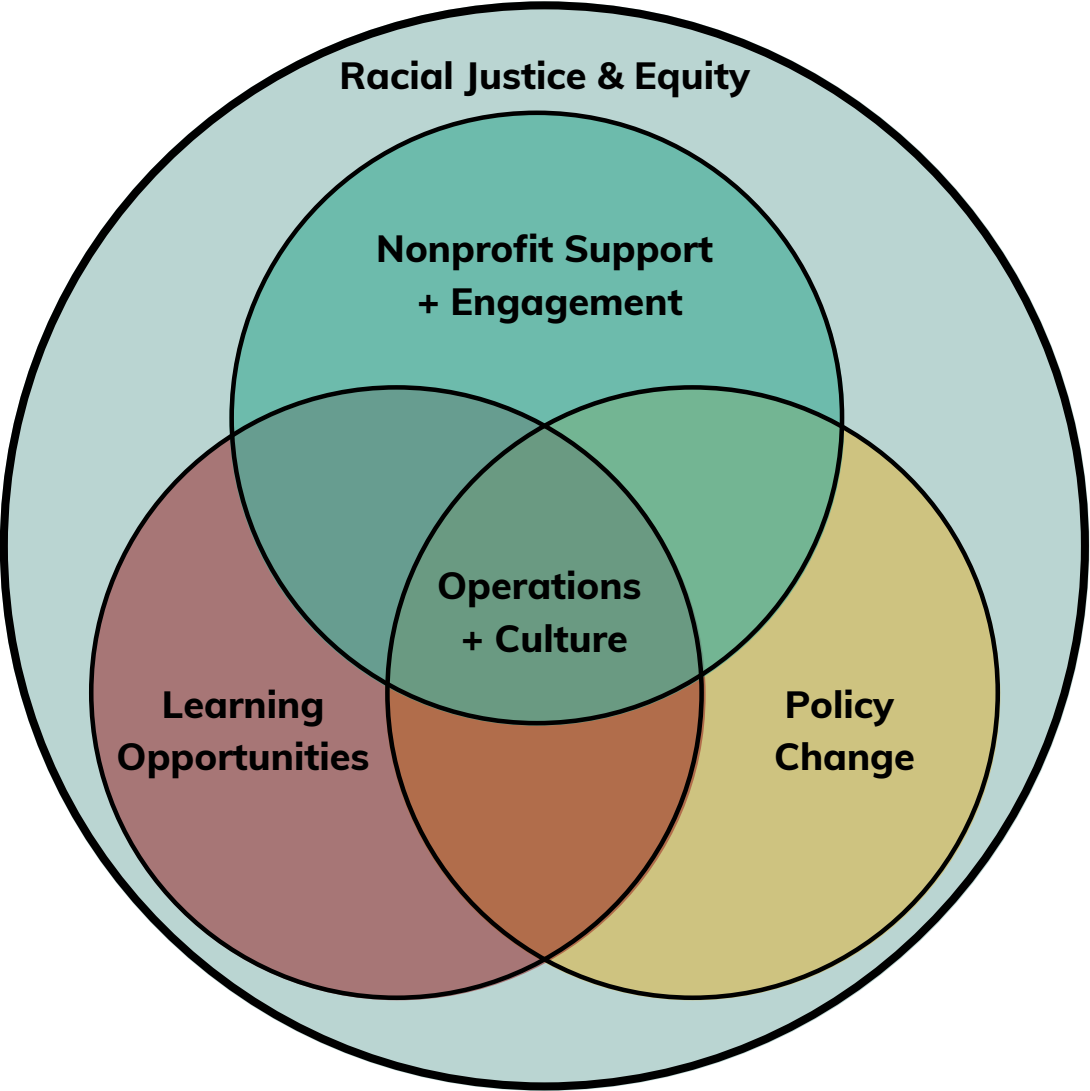
The four pillars of our Strategic Framework are:



Because SVCN is deeply committed to racial justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (REDI), we have decided to weave these principles into everything we do, and in turn, throughout the pillars and the framework.

SVCN's Non-Negotiables

These five non-negotiable areas (four pillars and Racial Justice & Equity) to which SVCN must attend to be mission-aligned are named and defined below, paired with a strategic commitment for each. These non-negotiables comprise the heart of this framework.



SVCN's Non-Negotiable Areas

Racial Justice and Equity

SVCN recognizes that existing systems of power and privilege spread access to resources in ways that lead to inequities, including race-based inequities and oppression. This is true in nonprofit organizations as it is in other institutions. SVCN works to disrupt the status quo of systemic racism and other oppressions by providing resources to nonprofits to support racial justice and equity work at individual and sector system levels.

Our Strategic Commitment is to: Be a change-agent and a model of possibility by centering racial justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion principles in everything SVCN does internally and externally.

Nonprofit Support + Engagement

With nonprofits as the most trusted type of organization in our Country, the nonprofit sector is a critical voice in creating thriving communities and the systems change necessary to sustain them. As a nonprofit association, we balance providing support to build the skill and capacity of local nonprofits with responding to emerging needs and issues within the sector and community—leading or supporting depending on the circumstance. In the context of nonprofit support, we provide technical assistance, convene nonprofits, make available resources to both members and the local nonprofit ecosystem, and facilitate opportunities for nonprofits to support one another. We identify needs by listening to nonprofit leaders and create resources to address individual organization and sector-wide challenges.

Our Strategic Commitment is to: Support the nonprofit ecosystem by being a trusted source and hub of information, resources, and connection for nonprofits in Silicon Valley, that facilitates nonprofit collaboration and collective impact.

SVCN's Non-Negotiable Areas

Policy Change

Government policy advocacy is an effective way to change systemically-rooted inequities in our community as well as strengthen the nonprofit sector. SVCN's long history of advocacy conducted arm-in-arm with local nonprofits has resulted in a strong network, track record of changemaking, and a positive reputation that affords SVCN and the local nonprofit ecosystem influence with decision makers. Our advocacy is often conducted together with and driven by groups of nonprofits that have shared interests and challenges, as well as the community members served and organized by nonprofits.

Our Strategic Commitment is to: Leverage our power, positionality, and access, in order to partner with, amplify, and support community to influence decision-makers to change systems in ways that address the biggest challenges facing nonprofits and the communities they serve.

SVCN's Non-Negotiable Areas

Learning Opportunities

SVCN leverages its relationships with members and non-members alike to identify and respond to the full scope of emerging sector needs and best practices. Our learning programs address these needs in order to improve how organizations function and ensure they are sustainable and thriving so they in turn can better support the communities they serve. SVCN creates spaces for nonprofit leaders to build skill-sets central to their function as employees, community members, and advocates.

Our Strategic Commitment is to: Build sector capacity through providing valuable learning and development opportunities from internal and external content experts, including nonprofit peers. These opportunities include events and curriculum to nonprofits and their staff on racial justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion topics as well as other core operational content.

SVCN's Non-Negotiable Areas

Operations + Culture

Seamless and efficient processes are essential for nonprofits to be able to optimize impact. Balancing attention to operational sustainability and mission-focused work is as much an art as a science. We invest in our internal infrastructure and strategic partnerships to create the greatest return on investment in our mission-focused programming.

Our Strategic Commitment is to: Ensure that SVCN is a healthy organization with transparent, ethical, inclusive, equitable, just, collaborative, and accountable policies, procedures, and structures that keep SVCN sustainable, allow our staff to thrive, and serve as a model for other nonprofits.

Decision Screen for Future Programming

This set of questions can be applied to intentionally evaluate attractive opportunities that arise for SVCN and its programs and operations to support decision-making in line with organizational bandwidth. They are intended to stimulate discussion and reflection, rather than establish yes or no questions that add up to a definitive answer.

1. Does this program meaningfully contribute to one or more of SVCN's organizational priorities?
2. Does this program affect the interests of members and the local nonprofit community in a meaningful way?
3. Is SVCN a credible participant or leader in this work?
4. Is it likely our participation in this program substantially changes the outcome?
5. Are there sufficient resources, including staff capacity, to launch and sustain this? (If not, is the importance of the program significant enough to displace other priorities?)
6. Does this program map to existing staff expertise and interest?
7. What level of engagement is necessary and appropriate to advance SVCN's interests?
8. Is the proposed program duplicative within the local ecosystem?
9. Do potential benefits outweigh potential risks involved in pursuing this program?
10. Are there special circumstances related to this program?

Thank You

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