

**Scaling a Nonprofit for Social Impact**

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## SCALING A NONPROFIT FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

### Acknowledgements and Dedication

Beezy and Merr: You are my dreams come true. Thank you for showing me how to laugh and love and care about the people who mean most in this world. We did this together (literally, because you were on my lap), and I don't think I would have made it without you. I love you both so much!

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### Executive Summary

This capstone project examined opportunities for FosterHope, a nonprofit organization that services youth in foster care, to scale in a manner that maximized social impact. The intent was to provide recommendations on how FosterHope can create change within the county foster care system while continuing to serve the everyday needs of local youth in foster care.

The project leveraged the Scaling Up Social Innovation framework designed by Westley et al. (2014), which examines how social entrepreneurs recognize the need to scale up to achieve their desired impact on a specific community or cause. Westley et al.'s (2014) framework examines distinct patterns for scaling up, as well as the elements shaping these patterns:

- a. *Approach to change*: how an organization believes it can revise structures to achieve social goals.
- b. *Strength*: special advantages of the organization's chosen change strategies.
- c. *Challenge*: difficulties within chosen change strategies that may hinder goals.
- d. *Pathway for scaling up*: opportunities of moving from scaling out to scaling up.
- e. *Risk*: potential downside associated with scaling up.

Based on this framework, the study examined potential scaling options for FosterHope, using the following questions:

- *How has FosterHope grown since inception?*
- *What is the current vision for the future of FosterHope?*

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- *What are some of the opportunities the organization sees as possibilities for greater impact?*
- *What evidence do they see of gaps in their current operations?*

Through qualitative (interviews) methods, the study generated several useful findings to address each of the four research questions.

**Research Question #1:** *How has FosterHope grown since inception?*

**Finding:** Over the past 5 years, FosterHope has grown in terms of both the number of YFC served and the number of programs launched, but lack of board engagement is now threatening organizational stability.

**Research Question #2:** *What is the current vision for the future of FosterHope?*

**Finding:** Organizational discrepancies exist regarding the current vision for the future of FosterHope.

**Research Question #3:** *What are some of the opportunities the organization sees as possibilities for greater impact?*

**Finding:** While the organization wants to maintain the ability to fund emergency requests, the team and those who work closely with the organization recognize that the expansion of programs including ILP, Housing, Transportation, Mentoring, and Advocacy is most impactful for the long-term health and wellness of YFC in the county.

**Research Question #4:** *What evidence do they see of gaps in their current operations?*

**Finding:** FosterHope lacks the strategy and organizational structure necessary to achieve its scaling goals.

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The study generated seven recommendations based upon the research findings:

**Recommendation 1:** *FosterHope should reinvigorate their board of directors through recommitment or voluntary release of duties.*

**Recommendation 2:** *With renewed commitment from the board of directors, FosterHope should develop an organizational strategy that includes updated mission, vision, and values statements, a revised organizational structure, and forward-looking financial planning.*

**Recommendation 3:** *FosterHope should prioritize the development of a comprehensive fundraising strategy.*

**Recommendation 4:** *Develop a marketing and communications strategy with specific goals to drive organizational awareness, thought leadership, and fundraising activities.*

**Recommendation 5:** *FosterHope should develop a plan for staff and volunteer development.*

**Recommendation 6:** *FosterHope should develop formal evaluation systems for the board of directors, staff, volunteers, and programs.*

**Recommendation 7:** *Once Recommendations 1-6 are completed, FosterHope should re-evaluate scaling desires, goals, and opportunities.*

While this capstone is specific to scaling strategies related to FosterHope, the study provides valuable insights to similar stage nonprofits considering scaling for impact.

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Findings and recommendations outlined here will be useful to executives and staff professionals who manage nonprofits and can contribute to the development of strategies related to scaling these types of organizations to maximize social impact on vulnerable populations.

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### Introduction: State of Foster Youth in the United States in 2021

Youth in foster care (YFC) are one of the most exposed and underserved populations in the United States. Currently, there are over 400,000 YFC, with over 60% of those in the system of school age (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2020). Over 26,000 YFC age out of the foster system each year, with an expectation of self-sufficiency in skills that allow for success in independence (USDHHS, 2012). Of 243,060 children and youth who exited foster care nationally in 2015, approximately 19% left care between the ages of 16 and 19, and about 47% of those youth exited care through aging out or running away (USDHHS, 2018). These young adults often transition into adulthood with little to no help from their families, communities, or government, and typically have no safety net to fall back on if they do not have the experience or resources to make it on their own (Greenen & Powers, 2007).

Research clearly documents the persistent transition barriers these young people face as a result of being catapulted into this “instant adulthood.” Not only do YFC have disproportionately higher levels of mental health problems compared with youth in the general population, but multiple studies have demonstrated YFC are at a much greater risk for many negative outcomes upon independence, including homelessness, unemployment, poverty, early pregnancy, and low educational attainment (Pecora et al., 2006, 2009). Previous studies revealed that 2.5 to 4 years after youth had aged out of the child welfare system, 50% had used illegal drugs, 25% were involved with the legal system, and only 17% were completely self-supporting (Westat, 1991).

Most youth exiting foster care are undereducated and underemployed. The Midwest Evaluation follow-along study of 736 youth exiting foster care found that at age 19, 63% had a high school diploma or GED, compared to 91% of youth in the general

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population (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006). Only 8% of former foster youth reported they had graduated with 2- or 4-year postsecondary degrees, compared to a 46% graduation rate for young adults in the general population, and they had an employment rate of 48.3% as opposed to 79.9% for their general population peers (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006). Additional data from Missouri indicated that 62% of youth did not have a job when they were emancipated from care, and almost one-third had no work history (Dworsky, 2005; McMillen & Tucker, 1999). In a study conducted in California, Illinois, and South Carolina, youth emancipated from foster care had less than a 55% employment rate and typically received wages well below the poverty level (Goerge et al., 2002). As a result, many YFC are regularly and consistently thrust into independence without the support, guidance, or experience to be self-sufficient, often contributing to continued struggle and societal challenges.

Some states have developed programs to combat some of these negative outcomes. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) established Assembly Bill 12 (AB 12), aimed at empowering the Department of Children and Family Services to support and assist foster youth between the ages of 18 and 21; AB 12 ensures foster youth in California get housing and financial support for an additional 3 years, so long as they are studying, working, or taking job training courses (CDSS, n.d.). In 2012, 5,100 young Californians enrolled in the program, and by October 2019, there were 7,358 between the ages of 18 and 21 in foster care. The program has become very popular among YFC in California, with the CDSS reporting that almost 85% of those who turned 18 in foster care in the last year chose to remain in the system. Counties such as Santa Clara and Alameda reported 90% to 100% of teenagers opting into the program (Tiano & De Sa, 2020).



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Yet, even with programs like AB 12 in California, there is still a great need for organizations that help to provide a sense of permanency for YFC. Nonprofit organizations often fill that void through social programs that develop and implement strategies to afford both emotional and tangible support for YFC. While nonprofit organizations often provide scholarships, transportation options, and housing funding, more importantly, these programs offer safe and supportive environments that build self-esteem, encourage more frequent and positive interactions with government agencies, host opportunities for social interaction among YFC, and provide support in times of emergency when YFC have nowhere else to go.

FosterHope is a nonprofit organization based in California, with a mission to support and empower teens and young adults experiencing foster care. After working within the community for 5 years, FosterHope identified an opportunity to scale the organization to advocate for systemic change more effectively within the county foster care system. I partnered with FosterHope to help them better understand the strengths and gaps of their current growth plan in order to design a scaling strategy that will allow the organization to provide effective programming for YFC for years to come.

### Organizational Context

YFC in the county suffer from a lack of resources, attention, and advocacy solutions, opening the door for social problems like poverty, educational inequity, and mental and physical concerns. While local and state government have attempted to solve these problems through related programs, disparities among the vulnerable populations continue to grow.

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The idea for FosterHope came about in 2015 when founders Cindy and Ginger set out to create awareness walk to raise funds to benefit children in foster care. With help from the local community, the walk created a significant amount of awareness for local YFC and raised approximately \$10,000. The founders were encouraged to expand beyond a single event and incorporate into a nonprofit that fulfilled the diverse and unmet needs of YFC in the county.

In its nascency, FosterHope focused primarily on making a positive impact on the lives of YFC by working to solve urgent or emergency needs, including financial support; tangible items like clothing, personal care items, and school supplies; transportation; and housing. The organization would also fund or source birthday requests from YFC for larger-ticket items like gift cards, headphones, and new mobile phones.

Within a few years, local foster care administrators began to see the positive impact of FosterHope's involvement with YFC. In 2021, they awarded FosterHope government grants to run the county's Life Skills classes and Housing Navigator programs. The grants, as well as increased donations for COVID-19 needs, allowed FosterHope to expand its offerings to include the following programs:

- *Funding Requests:* Monetary donations for emergency needs or desired goods.
- *Life Skills:* Assists teens and young adults in making a successful transition to responsible, independent adulthood. The Life Skills program has become a major focus of the organization due to the recent grant.
- *Housing Navigator:* Facilitates the transition from foster care to independent living facilities. The Housing Navigator program is also ramping up as a major focus of the organization due to the grant.

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- *Mentoring*: Connects trained, background-checked mentors with foster youth to give the youth a reliable, stable, caring adult connection for a lifetime. Mentoring is growing as a focus of the organization.
- *Transportation*: Provides reliable transportation for teens and youth aging out of foster care to get to and from work, school, and doctor appointments. There has been some discussion of ending this program in order to focus more effectively on others.
- *Advocacy*: Protects the rights of youth in foster care, many of whom are in poverty and overcoming abuse and neglect, by delivering free legal services, supportive programs, and systemic solutions.

Executives at the county's Independent Living Program now also provide a steady stream of referrals to the FosterHope Mentoring Program, which seeks to build positive relationships between local businesspeople and YFC.

### **Funding**

FosterHope has two sources of funding: donations and grants. Donations make up most of the funding for urgent and emergency services. These donations tend to be small gifts, averaging around \$50, from local women in the community. In most cases, these women do not have a direct connection to YFC or the foster care system, but reportedly donate toward specific item requests because it makes them feel like they are making an immediate impact in the lives of children. In some cases, donors are adults who were previously in foster care and give because they know what it feels like to be in the system and need items that would typically be provided by a parent or guardian.

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Donors are alerted to giving opportunities through the FosterHope Facebook page and group, which they must “like” or be a member of to access. Typically, someone on the FosterHope team will post a request for three or four items for one child, and either one donor will take financial responsibility for all items or single donors will fulfill each request.

Other fundraising opportunities include the annual awareness walk, likely to return in 2021 after a 2-year hiatus, and small events like online benefit concerts, bingo nights, and awareness month campaigns. FosterHope does not currently have a corporate sponsor.

Grants are also a major funding source for FosterHope. In 1986, the federal government launched the Independent Living Program (ILP) to enable state child welfare agencies to meet the needs of youth transitioning from the foster care or juvenile justice system to independent living. The county Human Services Agency’s Children & Family Services staff provides independent living services to foster and emancipated youth between the ages of 16 and 21. While the county’s ILP team has its own set of ILP classes and housing coordinators, they have found that they cannot meet the demand alone and look to nonprofits to fill the gap. FosterHope was recently awarded contracts to run the county’s ILP classes and Housing Navigator program, which funds the support of housing navigators to help young adults aged 18–21 secure and maintain housing, with priority given to young adults in the foster care system.

These grants have validated FosterHope’s value and commitment to the community and provided the organization with much-needed new funding, but also created an additional layer of staffing needs that must be immediately addressed.

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### Staffing

FosterHope has one paid full-time employee, two paid part-time employees, four volunteer board members, and a fluid group of volunteers who participate on an as-needed basis.

Cindy, the founding director, is the organization's only full-time paid employee. She started her career as a foster care attorney and has a strong commitment to and foundational understanding of the issues surrounding YFC. Within the organization, she is seen as the "heart" of FosterHope and the driving force behind organizational vision and programming. She has crafted invaluable relationships within the county foster care system that provide significant opportunities for FosterHope to pitch and win new grant contracts. In conversations with county employees, they mentioned that the main reason they kept working with FosterHope was the executive director's understanding and dedication to YFC.

Unfortunately, per my interviews with her and others within FosterHope, Cindy is stretched extremely thin and has taken too much on her own shoulders. The level of responsibility she holds within the organization is not sustainable, and should she ever decide to step back, there is no one currently knowledgeable enough about the organization to move into her role and maintain business as usual. While there has been some conversation about opening paid administrative or coordinator roles, there is currently not enough budget to support the need.

Ginger, the executive director, holds another paid position; she works part-time and is provided a small monthly stipend. There are also two part-time employees: one who coordinates funding requests from the county ILP for urgent or emergency requests

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and another who manages new projects originating from the recently signed Housing Navigator contract with the county. In conversations with the part-time employees, they both mentioned how “tapped” the executive director was and how she could really use more help. Both women mentioned they asked if they could take on a full-time role but were told there was no budget for the additional hours. Additionally, the board members I spoke with felt these positions should be expanded to full-time roles to free the executive director’s capacity, but also mentioned that there was no budget to expand the hours.

FosterHope’s board of directors is made up of eight members, all of whom have some connection to and education about the foster care system. Feedback from and about the board was that while members were very committed to the cause, they were very busy and had very little time to dedicate to the organization, which resulted in missed project deadlines for which the executive director had to compensate. Because the new contracts have created substantially more responsibilities for leadership, there has been some conversation about potentially looking for new board members who can commit time to monthly duties, but to date, no change has been made.

### Problem of Practice

Research on social innovation suggests that the road to social change is a four-step process that includes (1) a desire to meet an unmet need within society, (2) testing of a potential solution, (3) scaling of that idea through replication, adaptation, and franchising, and (4) learning and evolving that idea to meet intended goals (Mulgan, 2006).

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Often, nonprofits face concerns because they attempt to implement a growth plan “even before a clear strategy for growth has been developed” (Warner, 2013, p. 259). They tend to focus on “scaling what works” to provide quick results even if those results do not necessarily match their long-term goals (Bradach & Grindle, 2014).

To develop an appropriate and effective scaling strategy, socially focused organizations need to determine their short- and long-term goals. If they choose to impact a broad audience across a large geographic area, scaling out might be an appropriate option; if they choose to focus on creating systemic change, scaling up might be more effective (Westley et al., 2014). Each route is acceptable, but the success of either is dependent on their desired goals.

With so much accelerated growth happening within FosterHope over the past year, the organization has not been able to dedicate the time or resources to developing an updated strategic growth plan that outlines short- and long-term goals. Instead, the team has become very reactive toward new opportunities. For example, the county presented FosterHope with major contracts like ILP and Housing Navigator, which the organization accepted, but there was not much thought at a strategic level as to whether these were the right types of growth opportunities to pursue.

The leaders of FosterHope also want to create systemic change in the long term, but understand that YFC in the county need more day-to-day help than ever, especially with the layered challenges resulting from COVID-19. In response, they want to find a scaling solution that helps them to continue to provide local resources while expanding the organization to include more advocacy and lobbying efforts.

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Leadership wants to grow the organization because they desire to positively impact the lives of YFC, but, in interviews with the team, there was little consensus about how and when to scale effectively. Some members of the FosterHope board of directors believe the organization should geographically scale around the programs on which it was founded, including the fulfillment of urgent and emergency requests. Others, including the executive director, believe that programs like ILP, Housing, and Advocacy should be included in the growth trajectory, as they fundamentally change the way that YFC engage with the foster care system.

Additionally, the executive director would like to see more resources dedicated to advocacy and lobbying. She would like to address some of the suspected cronyism within the county that has potentially negatively impacted how contracts are awarded and led to a severe lack of legal professionals who can handle YFC cases in an appropriate and timely manner. Subsequently, YFC are not provided with appropriate guidance, support, or services, and are more likely to turn to outside resources like FosterHope for help. Not only do such challenges cause systemic problems that increase the number of YFC seeking help, care, and support from organizations outside the system, but they also act as real threats to the organization's sustainability, as the need for services will soon outpace their resource capacity to provide them.

While all growth options require additional staffing resources, the responsibilities of those new hires will differ dramatically based on the chosen scaling pathway. For example, if FosterHope moves toward expanding current resources to a bigger radius, they will likely need to onboard more volunteers who can address immediate requirements like acquiring and distributing clothing, as well as securing home



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furnishings and transportation to YFC. They will also need to increase infrastructure around donation captures and delivery of goods and services to YFC.

However, if the organization chooses to address systematic issues, they will likely need to recruit either paid or volunteer legal, advocacy, and lobbying resources that can work to create positive change at the county and state levels. They may also need to expand to locations such as Sacramento, to be closer to state capitol business.

If they choose to move forward with both the expansion of current resources and taking on systematic issues, they will need to determine how they can fund growth opportunities in both areas and the potential return on investment received.

While the founders recognize that a deeper expansion addressing systemic change is more time and labor intensive, expensive, and logistically difficult, they are looking for insights that address how they can scale in this manner and have a greater impact on the lives of YFC in the long term.

With the needs of YFC in the county growing more urgent over time, FosterHope has determined that sustainable organizational growth is necessary to meet the ongoing needs of the community. Leadership must effectively evolve the current scaling strategies to better anticipate, cope with, and adapt to new or ever-present uncertainties and opportunities that face the YFC audience. Therefore, the problem of practice at FosterHope can be defined as follows: "We need to figure out how to grow in a way that serves to create change within the foster care system in the county while also continuing to meet the everyday needs of our local YFC."

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### Literature Review

Before collecting and analyzing data to better understand an applicable growth trajectory for FosterHope, I reviewed literature related to effectively scaling nonprofit organizations. The literature highlighted these areas of importance: defining scaling, paths to scaling, organizational readiness, and finally, challenges and returns of scaling a nonprofit organization.

### **Growth vs. Scaling**

Often the terms *scaling* and *growth* are used interchangeably, but there are important differences between them. Discussions of organizational growth in the literature begin with Penrose (1959), who defined growth as an increase in programs, clients serviced, or revenue. Later research included employee growth as part of that definition (Starbuck, 1964). Others then combined the measurement factors to describe growth as “a change in size, measured by an increase in employees, assets, capacity, and sales” (Kimberly, 1976).

The idea of growth evolved over time and began to consistently include reference to an expenditure of resources, as highlighted by the Organizational Life Cycle Model. This model begins with an entrepreneurial stage and moves to a growth or expansion stage, then a domain protection stage, and finally, a stability stage. Growth occurs only after the entrepreneurial stage, defined as a period when most organizations make significant initial investments in resources (Dodge et al., 1994).

More recently, modern social entrepreneurs have expressed interest in new ways to grow their organizations more efficiently, without significant resource expenditure. They have turned to the idea of scaling, which ultimately seeks to expand an

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organization's positive impact on a community it serves, in lieu of profit, without necessarily scaling its size (Bradach, 2010). Researchers have called this type of entrepreneurial behavior *bricolage*, defined as the "use of whatever resources and repertoires one has to perform whatever task one faces" (Weick, 1993, p. 353). Others have identified this specific type of bricolage as *social bricolage*, or the ability for nonprofit organizations to leverage existing resources to solve problems and create new opportunities for organizations focused on social impact (Zahra et al., 2009).

Most recently, the term *scaling* has been favored by social entrepreneurs, as it more effectively speaks to the many ways that nonprofits can expand their social impact and satisfy a social need (Bauwens et al., 2020). While most nonprofit organizations have not yet figured out how to scale without resources, they have accepted scaling for impact as a desirable and important organizational goal (Kiviluoto, 2013).

### **Scaling for Impact**

The idea of scaling for social impact is popular among nonprofit organizations because it includes growth metrics beyond revenue and profit (André & Pache, 2016). Early research on the topic highlighted scaling for social impact as increasing the impact of grassroots organizations and their programs (Uvin, 1996; Uvin et al., 2000). Alvord et al. (2004) expanded the definition to include three patterns for social impact: reaching more people by increasing the area serviced, developing more services to reach more people, and working to change behavior. Dees et al. (2004) expanded the definition to include a discussion of quality of programming, not just organizational size, when concluding that scaling for social impact should focus not just on the number of people an organization serves, but also on how well that group is served. While others continued to describe scaling for social impact as a mechanism to serve more people

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over a wide geographic area (Sud et al., 2009), support for quality over quantity of program growth grew, as research began to look at how organizations could expand their programming to support the intensity of the problems they were serving (Desa & Koch, 2014).

Researchers soon began to see scaling for impact as a continuum, where the goal was to increase social change but the strategies to reach that goal might differ (Lyon & Fernandez, 2010). Smith and Stevens (2010) refined the idea of scaling by differentiating between different kinds of scaling; *scaling up* referred to expanding into new geographic locations, while *scaling deep* was defined as making a greater impact on a specific community. Their work led to revised and more specific pathways to scaling and different measures of success, including qualitative, quantitative, or a combination of both (Lee & Restrepo, 2015; Westley et al., 2014).

### Paths to Scaling

Scaling for social impact typically takes one or a combination of paths, often described as “scaling out,” “scaling across,” “scaling deep,” and “scaling up” (Westley et al., 2014).

#### *Scaling Out*

Scaling out is defined as “an organization attempting to affect *more* people and cover a larger geographic area” (Westley et al., 2014). Westley et al. (2011) described the approach as moving from the micro scale, where the innovation begins, into the meso scale, where the innovation takes a more specific shape to solve a problem.

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When scaling out, organizations often utilize growth strategies including dissemination and branching (Dees et al., 2004), replication and adaptation (Mulgan, 2006), and franchising or affiliation (Bradach, 2003) to increase their reach to broader communities. While results from strategies like replication and diffusion may generate quick and tangible outcomes in terms of audience expansion (Bradach, 2010), researchers have found these methods do not contribute to systemic change unless they are used with a variety of other approaches that serve to scale the impact up (Moore et al., 2015). Dees et al. (2004) added that while scaling out is a viable growth option, it is merely one component of a more robust strategy.

### *Scaling Across*

Scaling across focuses on how social innovators can share their work with other similar organizations, including partners or broader networks, to reach a greater audience (André & Pache, 2016).

### *Scaling Deep*

Scaling deep highlights an expansion of programs in terms of quality, not necessarily quantity, to improve the impact of a particular program on a specific audience (André & Pache, 2016).

### *Scaling Up*

Scaling up has been defined differently within the literature. There are several definitions that refer to scaling up in a quantitative manner, as a method of reaching new audiences in new locations through replication or dissemination (André & Pache, 2016; Bradach, 2010; Dees et al., 2004). Another definition identifies scaling up in

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terms of impact, where expansion seeks to create institutional change (Westley & Antadze, 2010).

If an organization chooses to grow at the macro scale and effect systemic change in large institutions (Westley et al., 2011), they must understand the strategies and resources necessary to develop, expand, and sustain their organization in a manner that reaches this transformative scale (Bradach & Grindle, 2014). Complementary research suggests that social organizations that aim to fundamentally change the systems they exist within cannot be successful through only dissemination and replication (Dees et al., 2004; Bradach, 2010). To meet deeper social impact goals, organizations must develop a “social innovation,” which Westley and Antadze (2010) defined as a new process that creates a measurable impact by “profoundly changing the basic routines, resource and authority flows, or beliefs of the social system in which the innovation occurs” (p. 2). For a social organization to remain durable, scalable, and impactful, it must evolve to include a disruption to the existing system (Mumford, 2002). Westley et al. (2014) described this type of disruption as aiming to address the “broader institutional or systemic roots of a problem” (p. 237).

The scaling-up theory is influenced by Christensen et al. (2006), who suggested that there are two separate types of innovations: sustaining innovations, which often occur accidentally in response to customer demands, and disruptive innovations, which promote social change by design. They also discussed how catalytic innovations that create long-term systemic change share five qualities:

- Create change through scaling and replication
- Meet underserved populations
- Offer products and/or services that are deemed “good enough”

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- Generate resources in a different way than competitors might find appealing
- Not taken seriously by market stakeholders (Christensen et al., 2006).

Once a catalytic innovation has been identified, according to Westley et al. (2014), the process of scaling up to create transformative change can begin. They characterized the dynamics and pathways of scaling in cases of social innovation by describing five unique pathways within the scaling-up strategy to advance systemic change (Westley et al., 2014). This framework served as the basis of this research project and is described in more detail later.

### What Scaling Path Is Right?

There is no one single best way for organizations to scale; instead, research has implied that a scaling strategy should include multiple paths to make a greater impact.

Moore et al. (2015) provided additional context to this perspective by recommending that organizations consider intertwining the strategies associated with scaling up and scaling out. They highlighted the important relationship between the two strategies and inferred that when organizations scale both up and out, they learn and evolve more effectively, leading to larger and more impactful system change (Bloom & Dees, 2008; Moore et al., 2015).

Additionally, organizations should approach scaling timing and readiness on an individual basis. Dees et al. (2004) outlined “five Rs” that nonprofits can use to define a unique approach to scaling: readiness, receptivity, resources, risks, and returns.

- **Readiness:** *Is the organization ready to scale?*
- **Receptivity:** *Does the target audience want the program or services the organization is attempting to scale?*

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- **Resources:** *What resources does the organization need to scale successfully?*
- **Risks:** *What are the risks of scaling?*
- **Returns:** *What are the benefits of scaling?*

### Risks and Challenges of Scaling for Impact

There are several risks to scaling a nonprofit organization. Economic, social institutional, and cultural barriers often take considerable resource expenditure to overcome (Davies et al., 2019; Robinson, 2006). Additionally, raising funds and driving awareness consume resources (Hynes, 2009). If after this undertaking, the organization is not successful in scaling, failure can mean wasted time, lost revenue, and wasted resources, in addition to heightened reputation issues (Dees et al., 2004).

Additionally, Zhao and Han (2020) highlighted different and more specific risks that can occur depending on what path to scaling the organization takes. For example, scaling deep, which they defined as addressing social problems more deeply, can cause category fuzziness and internal and external misperceptions of the organization, potentially leading to concerns with operations and financial self-sufficiency; scaling wide, or broadly, can lead to misrepresentation of services or programs and possible legal ambiguity, which could cause a greater expenditure of resources, possibly causing financial risks or failure (Zhao & Han, 2020).

For nonprofits that exhibit characteristics of social bricoleurs, such as reliance on readily available resources and improvisation rather than formal planning, the ability to expand is often limited by their own ignorance of social needs and opportunities outside the realm of their knowledge. These types of organizations are often tapped into local knowledge and deeply committed to the communities they serve, but lack the business



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knowledge, training, and skillsets necessary to successfully scale their unique programs beyond what they know best. This often leads to resource exhaustion, both in terms of money and staff, and ultimately failure (Zahra et al., 2009).

Finally, but possibly most important for mission-driven nonprofits, is the danger of losing focus on the goal of scaling, whether that is to impact more people or create institutional change. In becoming wrapped up in the administrative tasks of growth, like fundraising, staff expansion, and financial planning, nonprofits risk becoming beholden to new partners and ideas that may take the focus off those they serve. Research has shown that organizations attentive to the integration of societal and economic objectives may see greater success and less mission drift (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Battilana et al., 2012; Ebrahim et al., 2014). While some organizational shift is natural, organizations must consider ways to stay closely connected to all their key stakeholders without sacrificing one set for another. It is important to remember that many nonprofits exist to help the most vulnerable populations, and should they lose sight of that, they will likely end up hurting the communities they are working to help (Seelos & Mair, 2016).

### **Returns of Scaling for Impact**

One of the main benefits of scaling for impact is spreading excellence within an organization as it grows (Seelos & Mair, 2016). While the internal aspects of that definition are important, almost more significantly, organizations that scale successfully will move ideas from one context to a larger one and have a positive impact on their respective issue areas, while catalyzing ongoing innovation for systemic change (Bradach, 2010; Moore et al., 2015). The change will then lead to rules, resource flows,

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cultural beliefs, and relationships that continue to drive positive change in the future (Moore et al., 2015).

### Theoretical Framework

The Scaling Up Social Innovation framework designed by Westley et al. (2014) examines how social entrepreneurs recognize the need to scale up to achieve their desired impact on a specific community or cause. The process of scaling out then requires a strategic change of direction in how the organization chooses to grow, the goal of the growth, and the scaling strategies necessary to attain success (Westley et al., 2014).

Westley et al.'s (2014) framework examines distinct patterns for scaling up, as well as the elements shaping these patterns:

- f. *Approach to change*: how an organization believes it can revise structures to achieve social goals.
- g. *Strength*: special advantages of the organization's chosen change strategies.
- h. *Challenge*: difficulties within chosen change strategies that may hinder goals.
- i. *Pathway for scaling up*: opportunities of moving from scaling out to scaling up.
- j. *Risk*: potential downside associated with scaling up.

The framework acknowledges that while there are different pathways to scaling, individual organizations must identify which is most effective for their unique circumstances and elements shaping the pathway (Westley et al., 2014).

### **Research Questions**

This study was a quality improvement project intended to discover the scaling paths for FosterHope. Westley et al.'s (2014) conceptual framework, which examines distinct

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patterns for scaling up as well as the elements shaping these patterns, guided the research questions:

*R1: How has FosterHope grown since inception?*

*R2: What is the current vision for the future of FosterHope?*

*R3: What are some of the opportunities the organization sees as possibilities for greater impact?*

*R4: What evidence do they see of gaps in their current operations?*

### Project Design

#### Data Collection

To answer the research questions, I collected FosterHope resources, materials, and assets, including program descriptions, the most recent organizational staffing chart, website information, and social media posts from 2020 and 2021. I also hosted 10 interviews with professionals and consumers related to FosterHope. I interviewed the organization's founding director and executive director, a board representative, two part-time employees, two ILP coordinators within the county, one ILP leader within a different county, a FosterHope volunteer, and a FosterHope potential donor.

The existing documents and collected data were gathered and analyzed to better understand the current needs of YFC in the county, how FosterHope has grown since its inception, and the vision for future growth among individuals in executive roles and on the board of directors.

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*Table 1. Data Collection Connected to Research Questions*

Data Source	Type of Data	Research Questions
Brand Presentation	Existing	1, 2, 3
Program Descriptions	Existing	1, 2, 3
Website	Existing	1, 2, 3
Social Media Posts	Existing	1, 2, 3, 4
Organization Staffing Chart	Existing	1, 2, 3
Interviews	Collected	1, 2, 3, 4

### **Materials**

The collected materials were critical to understanding FosterHope’s current strategy for growth. I reached out to the founding director and asked her to share the materials that she developed as well as any other external-facing assets. She responded that internal documentation had been an issue for the organization, and they did not have an annual plan or updated budget, mostly because of issues related to consensus from the board of directors. There was a strategic planning session that took place in 2020, but it was “not productive”, and no strategic plan was developed as a result.

I was able to obtain a brand presentation slide deck that the founding director used when she presented to stakeholders, but it was not updated to include ILP or Housing program information. The website was also very outdated, and while it included some information on programs, most sections needed updating, according to the founding director.

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While internal documents were in draft form, most were updated in terms of future direction for program expansion, including some ideas of where and how the organization could expand over the next 6–12 months and in the long term. All printed external assets were outdated in terms of programs offered and organizational mission/vision. The founding director mentioned that they did not have the capacity to update at this time, but that it was not a pressing issue because most current information was disseminated through social media, especially Facebook and Instagram.

Social media has been an extremely important outlet for FosterHope because the community of donors and volunteers relies on Facebook and Instagram for updates on when and how they should donate or volunteer. Additionally, the founding director posts content about the newest ILP classes offered, as well as updates on Housing Navigator indicatives and placements. We discussed how she was not an expert in developing social content and it was difficult to keep up a consistent social cadence because of her busy schedule. Most donors are directed to giving opportunities through social media as well.

### **Interviews**

All interview questions were based on the Scaling Up for Social Innovation framework and mapped back to Westley et al.'s (2014) distinct patterns for scaling up as well as the elements shaping these patterns.

Different sets of questions were created for each stakeholder group. Small changes were made to better frame some questions for specific stakeholder understanding of growth initiatives and assessment of landscape opportunities, challenges, and risks (see

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Appendix C). All survey questions were reviewed and approved by the founding director.

*Table 2. Interview Questions for Founders and Board of Directors*

Question	Framework Element
1. How has this organization changed over its history?	Approach
2. What do you want to achieve in the future in terms of growth?	Approach
3. Do you see this organization moving into additional areas beyond its current scope? Describe these.	Approach
4. What changes would the organization need to make to the current structure to achieve goals related to growth?	Approach
5. What special advantages does the organization have that make it uniquely suited to achieve goals related to growth?	Strength
6. What challenges face the organization that might hinder the ability to meet social impact goals?	Challenge
7. What opportunities would the organization gain by moving from a "scaling out" to "scaling up" strategy?	Pathway for Scaling Up
8. What risks, if any, can be identified as a result of scaling up?	Risk

Recruitment for the interviews leveraged a snowball approach. The founding director provided names and contact information of individuals with whom she thought it would be beneficial for me to speak. She contacted those individuals and let them know I would be in touch. From there, I followed up via email with an invitation to participate in an interview via Zoom. As individuals responded, I confirmed meeting dates and times and sent meeting requests with Zoom links. Prior to beginning each interview, I

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reiterated the purpose of the interview with each individual and asked for permission to record the Zoom meeting. All participants in each group subset were asked the same questions; in most cases additional questions were asked to expound on or clarify certain responses.

### Data Analysis

#### **FosterHope Brand Materials**

The existing FosterHope brand materials were analyzed to better understand the organization's team structure and responsibilities, identify active programs, and distinguish growth areas. I focused particularly on a recent FosterHope brand presentation, marketing materials, and social media channel content going back 2 years. By analyzing these documents, I was better able to understand how the organization changed over its history (Research Question 1), what the organization wanted to achieve in the future in terms of growth (Research Question 2), and special advantages that made it uniquely suited to achieve goals related to growth (Research Question 3). I wanted to understand these points so that I had deeper context when conducting the interviews.

While the document analysis was helpful in learning about how FosterHope functioned in the past, it more importantly established that many of the documents currently being leveraged at events or with key stakeholders were severely outdated. Additionally, important presentations used for donor relations and grant presentations were not representative of the organization's current program menu or mission.

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### Interview Responses

The interview responses were analyzed to provide guidance around the entirety of the research questions. Transcriptions were reviewed and organized using a code derived from the Scaling Up for Innovation Framework (Westley et al., 2014).

I read through all the brand assets, social posts, and interviews and organized the statements from the interviews into broad categories based on the Scaling Up framework (Westley et al., 2014):

- Approach
- Strengths
- Challenges
- Pathway to Scaling
- Risks

I then reviewed the interview transcripts once again, identifying quotes that aligned with the initial coding categories. As coding progressed, themes quickly emerged and subcategories in each initial category became evident. For example, when interviewees described FosterHope's approach to growth since inception, many described a move from short-term to long-term programming impact, lack of organizational structure, and a concern about organizational stability, which led to branching of subcategories under Approach. I then organized quotes and commentary around each subcategory and coded each appropriately, using the guide table below. The same process was completed for subsequent categories, and the insights curated from the coding exercises became the basis for the initial findings.



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Table 3. Coding Categories

Code Descriptor	Code	Research Question(s)	
<p>Approach, Short-Term to Long-Term Impact</p> <p>Approach, Lack of Org. Structure and Process</p> <p>Approach, Board Concerns</p> <p>Approach, Staffing Concerns</p> <p>Approach, Org. Stability Concerns</p>	<p>ASTLT</p> <p>ALOSP</p> <p>ABC</p> <p>ASC</p> <p>OSC</p>	<p><i>How has FosterHope grown since inception?</i></p> <p><i>What is the current vision for the future of FosterHope?</i></p>	<p><i>Approach</i></p>
<p>Strength, Commitment</p> <p>Strength, Executive Director</p> <p>Strength, Programming</p> <p>Strength, Flexibility</p> <p>PS, Long-Term Programming</p> <p>PS, Audience Expansion</p> <p>PS, Legal and Advocacy</p>	<p>SC</p> <p>SED</p> <p>SP</p> <p>SF</p> <p>PSLTP</p> <p>PSAE</p> <p>PSLA</p>	<p><i>What are some of the opportunities the organization sees as possibilities for greater impact?</i></p>	<p><i>Strengths/ Pathway to Scaling</i></p>
<p>Challenge, Need for Strategic Planning</p> <p>Challenge, Lack of Organizational Structure</p> <p>Challenge, Financial Sustainability</p> <p>Challenge, Lack of Systems</p> <p>Challenge, Skill Development</p> <p>Challenge, Staffing Concerns</p> <p>Challenge, Culture Concerns</p> <p>Risk, Dilution of Mission</p> <p>Risk, Organizational Stability</p>	<p>CSP</p> <p>CLOS</p> <p>CFS</p> <p>CLS</p> <p>CSD</p> <p>CSC</p> <p>CCC</p> <p>RSM</p> <p>ROS</p>	<p><i>What evidence do they see of gaps in their current operations?</i></p>	<p><i>Challenges/Risks</i></p>

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### Findings

**Research Question #1:** *How has FosterHope grown since inception?*

**Finding:** Over the past 5 years, FosterHope has grown in terms of both the number of YFC served and the number of programs launched, but lack of board engagement is now threatening organizational stability.

FosterHope was founded as a community-driven initiative to fund the immediate needs of YFC, including clothing and personal care items, transportation, orthodontics, and extracurricular activities. One interviewee noted, "When we first formed the organization, we basically triaged the main needs for kids in the county and focused quite a bit on the younger population because we felt they were the most vulnerable." The founders also wanted to bring some joy to YFC through housewarming parties for new placements, birthday parties, and holiday gift giving. Donors were very connected to these programs because they could purchase tangible items and see them delivered to YFC through social media. Donors commented that they felt like they were making a direct impact on these youth by donating specific items.

However, after working with county and other organizations, the founders realized that while younger YFC were indeed vulnerable, they had police and social workers to protect them, but older YFC did not have those protections after they aged out. FosterHope began evolving out of programs that met a specific short-term need (like funding requests) and developing impactful programs that met the longer-term needs of older YFC aging out of care. One interviewee described this as a shift from "tangible to practical" services, with more focus on relational and practical programs rather than those that were more "fun and theoretical."

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FosterHope began communicating the revised goals to the foster community in the county, and many were excited about their mission. The county noticed that the organization was “forward thinking and flexible,” and awarded FosterHope separate contracts to run the Transportation Fund, take over ILP classes, and finally run the Housing Navigator program, which seeks to house YFC who are aging out and reduce homelessness within the population.

Additionally, the founders were committed to developing a strong mentoring program. A big shift occurred when the board of directors recruited a new member who had recently aged out of the foster system in the county. He provided the perspective that when you are YFC, no one is really taking the time or energy to prepare you for the real world. One interviewee said, “No one is teaching these kids basic things like learning cooking, cleaning, applying for college, or even how to drive, getting a license, taking a driving test—these kids just fall through the crack.” Shortly after the new member joined the board, mentoring became an important concentration for FosterHope. While they still funded emergency needs, the organization halted the Birthday Wishes program and really committed to the vision of moving YFC from “crisis to stability,” as one interviewee said.

As FosterHope expanded, the structure of the organization evolved as well. Conversations with the founders revealed that when the organization expanded to include a board of directors and employees, there were some efforts to divide the board member and team functions into three general areas: governance, programs, and administration. The founders did some research into nonprofit management best practices and decided that this structure would work for their organization.

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The original concept for the organizational structure was that the board would be responsible for developing the policies of the organization and individual members of the board would be accountable for carrying out different operations. The administration, with Cindy as the full-time paid executive director, would then act as liaison to the board, implementing their direction and overseeing the staff who ran the individual programs. The goal then became adding department heads to manage fundraising and development, volunteers, marketing, operations, and human resources, as well as programs like Funding Requests, Housing Navigator, ILP, and Mentoring. The program heads would report to Cindy and have additional staff as necessary.

For a while, the board and team members remained highly engaged and active within the organization, but unfortunately, over time, due to professional and personal commitments, board members became less involved and “just seem[ed] tapped.” They were extremely busy as foster parents or working their way through college, and just not as committed as they once had been. Some board members shifted their responsibilities to the administration, leaving Cindy, Ginger, and a few others with the bulk of the accountability and decision-making, and their lack of engagement made it difficult to achieve even the most basic organizational planning and goal setting. One interviewee mentioned that there was a board planning meeting last year, but that unfortunately it was “not effective” because it seemed as though members were either not “fully there” or had very different opinions on the future of the organization. There are no current plans to engage in any additional board planning meetings.

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Because the board was unable to uphold its responsibilities around foundational elements like budgeting, fundraising, and marketing, the organization was never able to raise enough funds to hire full-time staff to oversee departments. Instead, they made two part-time hires, including someone to oversee the funding requests and someone to manage the Birthday Wishes program. Currently, they are hiring for two additional roles to help coordinate the Housing and ILP programs, but no positions have been filled yet.

Additionally, a large part of the board's responsibilities is fundraising, but due to "time constraints" and a general feeling of "not knowing what to do," the board has not been actively raising funds for the organization, which significantly impacts their ability to increase critical staff roles. One interviewee suggested that if the board raised just enough money to hire a development or donor relations person, they would pay for themselves 10 times over. They mentioned that a lot of people wanted to donate, but without a position to curate and encourage those donors, they often went unfulfilled. They said, "We need someone to manage that process so we can raise money to hire more people and have them run our programs."

Additional concerns around the devolution of FosterHope's structure included fears that while there was an idea for how FosterHope should function on paper, most of the daily heavy lifting was done by Cindy, who had taken on not only executive director responsibilities but also those of the board of directors. With more contracts like Housing Navigator and ILP, and the expansion of programs like Mentoring, there was worry that the current arrangement was "wearing on Cindy" and did not "seem sustainable." One interviewee expressed fear that if Cindy were to "get burnt out and leave, the organization could not exist without her."

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Organizational sustainability was also challenged by the finding that FosterHope had no communication, reporting, or evaluation systems in place. When the board of directors was first put into place, they tried to create some formalization around strategic planning, budgeting, performance evaluation, relationship building, and marketing/communications, but as board members stepped back and Cindy took more on, many of those formal processes were dropped for the sake of timeliness and effectiveness.

While Cindy's skills as a nonprofit executive director evolved with the growth of the organization, she still did not feel as though she had the background, education, and experience to run all the aspects of a nonprofit by herself. Her background as a foster attorney and advocate had always been the most in-demand skill within the organization because she knew the ins and outs of the system like no one else. She could manage the legal aspects of the organization, build relationships with foster agencies and stakeholders, and provide a strategic vision for FosterHope, but she was not comfortable fundraising and did not feel like she had the appropriate background knowledge to successfully run marketing and social media campaigns. One interviewee said it seemed like Cindy was "the person who is kind of doing everything and that everything falls on, but she can't do everything. She's trying and doing a great job, but she could use help in areas like fundraising, marketing, finance, and grant-writing."

The board members did have some fundraising and marketing skills, which the organization should have been leveraging. Unfortunately, the founders found it difficult to engage those board members to help with important donor campaigns or provide feedback, insight, and implementation help on marketing and social media initiatives. One interviewee admitted that the organization was once more close-knit, but with the

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board members going in different directions and becoming less involved, the team was less connected than ever, both in terms of distance and a unified feeling of how to move forward as an organization.

Interviewees recognized the importance of the current board's dedication to YFC in the county, as well as their early contributions to the organization, but also raised the question, "Sometimes, I think of what we could accomplish if we had more enthusiastic and engaged board members to help plan and do the work."

**Research Question #2:** *What is the current vision for the future of FosterHope?*

**Finding:** Organizational discrepancies exist regarding the current vision for the future of FosterHope.

When I spoke with Cindy, it was clear that she had a strong vision for the future. She said, "With these new ILP and Housing contracts, we're going to become experts on all things life skills and housing for kids aging out of the system, which will have a positive impact on a lot of things like homelessness, job security, and just a general confidence for these kids about how to enter and live in the world on their own."

She wanted to be "able to touch these kids at all life stages" to encourage relationship building at a younger age and a more general awareness of the resources that FosterHope could offer YFC. She also mentioned that they were an "established nonprofit acting like a scrambling startup," and they needed to organize in terms of establishing processes for things like planning, budgeting, evaluating, and measuring their programming.

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While Cindy had a clear vision for the future of FosterHope, others had less robust ideas. In fact, not a single interviewee had the same answer for the future vision of FosterHope. While many answers contained similar components, no two answers were the same. One interviewee mentioned that her future vision for the organization included a focus on ILP classes, especially as YFC managers in the county were pushing the importance of obtaining a certificate after high school instead of immediately pursuing a 4-year college degree. Another interviewee, who managed ILP in a different county, mentioned that this was a very important direction within her department and something that FosterHope should consider as a main directive in the coming year. Two other interviewees highlighted mentoring as part of their vision, noting that often YFC lacked motivation and mentoring could provide inspiration on how YFC could successfully exist in the world.

Aside from programming, one of the biggest areas of discussion around a vision for the future was being more organized in terms of roles and responsibilities. As mentioned previously, due to lack of engagement from board members, the structure of the organization had devolved into a one-woman show. Another interviewee mentioned that the “lack of organization around basic procedures” was “really concerning” and people were “making things up as they go along.” One interviewee mentioned wanting to see the team be more connected and “function more as a cohesive unit.” One interviewee highlighted that they wanted to see a culture of dedication and commitment developed to achieve accountability.

Everyone I spoke with felt that the organization needed to hire more people to manage the new growth of programs like Housing Navigator, ILP, and Mentoring, but no one



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had a clear path to secure the resources and funding to do so. Two interviewees mentioned the importance of planning, in conjunction with the board, to develop a cohesive plan for the future that covered aspects like a redefined leadership role, team structure, finances, donor relations, and marketing, but recognized that it would be difficult to implement all that without support from the current board of directors.

While generally the interviewees were clear that they wanted to make a lasting impact on YFC in the county, there was no consensus on how to do so in a manner that was both sustainable for the organization and effectively met the short- and long-term needs of foster youth.

**Research Question #3:** *What are some of the opportunities the organization sees as possibilities for greater impact?*

**Finding:** While the organization wants to maintain the ability to fund emergency requests, the team and those who work closely with the organization recognize that the expansion of programs including ILP, Housing, Transportation, Mentoring, and Advocacy is most impactful for the long-term health and wellness of YFC in the county.

Among interviewees, there was general support to maintain the Funding Request program but also expand in other areas that would have a more significant and positive effect on YFC.

Backing for expanding the ILP classes was strong among all interviewees because of the recognition that YFC often lacked a parent, guardian, or engaged adult to teach them about independent living. One interviewee said, "As far as helping kids and

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making the biggest impact, it's really about these youth who are living on their own for the first time and just really don't have much or know much about how to exist in the world." Currently, FosterHope teaches a few classes per month, and enrollment is low. Interviewees discussed ways to reach more kids, including increased marketing efforts, compensation for attending, and an expanded breadth of YFC-driven topics, but they have been unable to reach those goals due to lack of resources.

One interviewee also discussed how ILP classes were incredibly important because they were "often one of the first ways we meet a lot of the youth." They said, "They get signed up for ILP classes, we send them over and then they continue to connect with us for additional resources."

Some interviewees linked ILP classes with the long-term benefits of completing certificate programs. They discussed how YFC entering ILP classes did not often realize the professional paths available to them and felt daunted by the option of applying to and attending a 2- or 4-year college. YFC then often had no other options than to secure a minimum-wage job that would not provide enough resources to survive comfortably on their own. The ILP classes offered an opportunity to explore different paths toward financial freedom:

One of the big pushes right now is getting our kids into programs where they can get a certificate for to become a medical assistant or plumber or an electrician or anything like that. I love that some want to go to college . . . but the reality is that with our kids, once they turn 18, we only have 3 years to prepare them for life after foster care. To prepare them for the epiphany that after 21, we're no longer going to be there. We're not going to provide the financial assistance that they've been receiving. And most of us will be out of the

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picture unless they have some sort of personal connection. A lot of times, they continue to call us and there is nothing we can do for them. What I've been seeing is they're turning 21 and they're not prepared. They're panicking too because they're like, I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm working at McDonald's and that's not enough to support housing needs, food, and their own children. So, what happens is that they go from the foster system to the welfare system—and that's what we're trying to stop.

Mentoring was also an area where most interviewees felt that they could make a much greater impact. One member of the FosterHope board said:

If you had to cut away everything else and only keep one thing, I think that would be mentoring, because it's all about those relationships that you're building with the youth. A lot of the issues that foster youth face stem from not having that sense of community or not having some form of a social safety net, like people that you can fall back on or that you can just talk to or get life advice from. Having a good mentor gives, shows you that there's someone who cares about you, even if they're a complete stranger. This person doesn't even know me, they just want me to be successful. As a foster youth, that gives you self-confidence and shows you that you are worth something.

Additionally, interviewees discussed how mentoring could help stop the “foster system to welfare system” cycle that YFC experienced. They said that “some of these kids just lack motivation” and “the free money and the asking and giving and getting and all of that . . . might be more damaging than it is helpful to our kids.” They went on to say, “Some of them are turning 21 and they're like, hey, where can I get government assistance to pay for my housing and food and all of that?” “So, a mentor becomes

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somebody they can trust and talk to,” said another interviewee. “And then the mentor invites that youth into their community, so they not only have a trusting adult, but now they have family and extended family through a community of friends, and they get to know that community.” Mentors “fill in those gaps for these kids, when they don't have anybody that wants to jump in and do that for them” and teach “those useful tools . . . our parents, teachers, those things, dad might,” said one interviewee. All interviewees mentioned how these “little skills” could help build self-confidence and a sense of control for YFC that would drive motivation to “do better and succeed not just day to day, but for an entire lifetime.”

Another interesting aspect of mentoring to create a greater impact went beyond foster youth. One interviewee mentioned the importance of providing mentors for parents whose children were in foster care to help guide them back on a path toward regaining custody of their children. They highlighted that mentoring could help “move parents forward to improve themselves and get their kids back.” They went on to discuss how these parents just needed guidance and often there was no one to support them; they “just need that inner confidence . . . and recognition for all the work they are doing to get their kids back.”

Housing and transportation were also discussed in several of the interviews because FosterHope was recently awarded the Housing Navigator grant to take over housing placements for YFC in the county. One interviewee said, “Housing is also going to be huge. It's going to be really big because we have an influx of youth exiting care. But what housing options do they have? Not a lot that they can afford on their own.” The expansion of the Housing Navigator program helped to prevent homeless and keep YFC off the streets. Two interviewees mentioned that if FosterHope were to successfully

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manage the Housing Navigator grant, there might be the possibility of additional funding to provide housing navigation services to more YFC or even in other counties.

An interviewee also discussed the importance of supporting more effective and efficient legal services for YFC in the county. She described the current situation:

Most of the foster families, especially before FosterHope came into town, didn't even know that the child in their home had been assigned a free attorney to advocate on their behalf because the attorney never tried to see these kids. So, the foster parents were only dealing with a social worker. And social workers in this area can have a bias and just deny a funding request outright, for no reason. So, these kids, they just weren't getting what they needed. When that happens, the attorneys should be the ones going to court and fight it out to ensure that even while there are different people with different biases, they can come together and make a decision that's in the best interest of the child – but that wasn't happening. FosterHope has been able to make a small positive impact on this system, but it will take a lot more work, including time and resources, that we just don't have right now.

According to one interviewee, FosterHope wanted to advocate for two main changes:

One, we want the contract to represent kids and parents in the county. It is one of the only government contracts in the county that does not ever go out for public bid. So, it's just renewed with the same people year after year. It's been like 40 years or something like that. We want it to go out for public bidding so that the best candidates can represent kids. And two, we want a system implemented where there is an annual audit so that a valid third party can make sure that the lawyers are doing what they're supposed to be doing. In the

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county, none of this is happening and its detrimental to our youth in foster care. Part of this vision is also having enough staff, funding, and resources to make this happen—right now, we're just not there.

While FosterHope started out solely providing emergency short-term funding for YFC, its evolution toward creating and participating in programs that address more systemic issues faced by YFC has been instrumental in the organization's growth. Not only has this strategy resulted in new grants and funding opportunities for the organization, but lasting benefits for YFC may include a potential decrease in homelessness, an increase in feelings of belonging and community, and a long-term path to professional and financial success.

**Research Question #4:** *What evidence do they see of gaps in their current operations?*

**Finding:** FosterHope lacks the strategy and organizational structure necessary to achieve its scaling goals.

Analysis of the brand assets and materials, as well as the interviews, revealed several gaps within FosterHope's operations, including a noticeable absence of strategy around planning, organizational structure, and financial sustainability. Without clear direction around these areas, the organization has been unable to develop a unified vision for the future or plans to reach scaling goals.

Almost by default, FosterHope became a very tactical organization. Staff and board members discussed feeling overwhelmed; because they had so much to do, it was very difficult to plan for the future. As a result, important decisions were often made hastily by one or two people, resulting in shortsighted, non-measurable, and unremarkable

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outcomes. Interviewees mentioned the need for a current strategic plan and updated mission statement to reflect the organization's perspective and reason for existence, as well as goals, objectives, and strategies to achieve that mission.

One interviewee mentioned that a plan had been developed, and I followed up with Cindy requesting the document. Upon review, the document referenced was more of a tactical outline of their programs than a true strategic plan that functioned as a blueprint for the organization. When I spoke with Cindy about the document, she agreed that it was very old and outdated because she did not have time to work on a developing a new version.

Additionally, in the website and brand materials, there was no reference to an official organizational mission or brand narrative that described why the organization was founded, context on whom it served, or unique value propositions for donors and the communities to which it provided aid. This lack of background information made it difficult to benchmark future results and, according to one interviewee, created confusion for new donors seeking more information on where and how their donations would be leveraged.

Beyond a strategic plan, FosterHope had no stand-alone plans for other areas of the organization, including fundraising and development, marketing, human resources (staffing and structure), and operations or board/committees. Interviewees recognized that this type of in-depth planning was necessary but indicated that everyone is just so busy with the day to day that planning anything takes a back burner.

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Additionally, interviewees noted that the board often acted as a roadblock to programs like Funding Requests or Fundraising, due to a lack of response or exceptionally long response time. One interviewee noted that it could take several weeks to receive an answer about whether they should fund a request; several times the response came too late, and the item was no longer needed, which could leave a negative image of FosterHope in the minds of YFC or those at the county Foster Services. Even when trying to schedule interviews with the board for this project, I received responses stating that members were too busy to discuss FosterHope with me, and another felt like he was not “fit to represent the organization.”

One area significantly impacted by the lack of board involvement has been fundraising and development. As previously noted, FosterHope does not have sufficient financial planning systems in place to determine the most effective ways to raise enough money to complete the activities that would allow them to achieve their long-term goals. This is, in part, due to the board’s lack of action on creating yearly budgets and financial goals that align with fundraising activities. Because of this, FosterHope has been very uninformed about the cost of proposed initiatives and how much they need to raise to meet their goals. There is no way to effectively scale the organization without this knowledge, making more effective financial management an extremely important goal for the organization.

While having a board invested in the topic of youth in foster care is important, FosterHope is at a pivotal point in its growth and cannot move forward with its scaling goals if the board is not engaged and accountable for major aspects of the organization. The structure of the organization has devolved to a point where there are no longer equal shares of obligation, leading to an overworked administrative staff. “I



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think to do well, we need to have a board that is supportive of the organization and our staff and is responsive when the call comes. We don't have that now and it's contributing to a lot of the problems we're seeing."

Another concern for FosterHope is their lack of systems to manage data. They have used a mix of very basic tools to manage their personnel, financial, donor, and volunteer records. While members of the team have investigated additional software that would help to centralize records and increase time efficiencies around fundraising and donor management, the initial investment to implement a new strategy has always been out of reach. One major concern I heard during the interviews was that important organizational information was stored on personal computers. If someone loses or damages their computer, there may be no way to recover those files, which could be detrimental, especially as the organization grows and acquires more valuable data.

Interviewees also identified several areas where skill development among staff was needed. Generally, interviewees, even those in solely volunteer positions, were eager to seek additional training, and some even mentioned they would do so at their own expense. One individual spoke in depth about a desire to increase nonprofit management, fundraising, and marketing skills among board members and administration. One said:

The lack of expertise is probably one of the biggest problems, because I have training in the field of foster care, but I don't have training in fundraising or marketing. I don't have training in budgeting or budget making or any of that business training. And so that's hard. And I sort of will rely on the board to do it. But they don't have nonprofit experience either, so we're all walking blind.

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In discussions with interviewees about the current staffing needs, most identified that more resources were needed, but were not clear on how to define or develop the resources necessary to hire more qualified employees. One interviewee highlighted the part-time element of the open positions, alluding to the fact that it was difficult to find experienced team members to only work a few hours a week.

Additionally, one interviewee mentioned that before the organization began hiring new staff, they should consider implementing stronger and more effective staff policy and performance appraisals, as well as plans for professional and team development, for current employees. One interviewee mentioned that staff members and volunteers had loose job descriptions, making it difficult to assess performance.

In terms of culture, discussions with interviewees revealed that the culture of FosterHope shifted dramatically over the past few years. One interviewee outlined that when the organization was founded, the board and the administration worked seamlessly together to problem-solve innovative solutions for YFC. Another mentioned that once the team impressed donors, stakeholders, and the community they served with a clear message and dedication, but when the amount of work started to increase, the team started to fall apart.

They went on to discuss how FosterHope used to be a meaningful side project for a lot of people, but the expectations had grown quite a bit. They said, "We seemed to have lost a sense of accountability and it's been hard to get it back. If we didn't have Cindy, FosterHope wouldn't be FosterHope. It just wouldn't be anything." Another mentioned:

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I just feel like we need to be more organized, and funds permitting, she should hire a team. Now, I feel like we're just made of, made up of a bunch of volunteers, you know, very part time. I only work an hour a day. So, it's very part time or volunteer. And I think people just kind of forget about it. So, I feel like there just needs to be a cohesive environment where we can come together, see faces and understand each other a bit better.

While FosterHope is clearly dedicated to serving the YFC community, many gaps within the current operations are hindering their stability as an organization and ultimately their ability to effectively serve the needs of foster youth in the long term.

### **Recommendations**

While FosterHope has intentions to scale various aspects of the organization, it is the recommendation of this capstone that the founders, in conjunction with the board of directors, develop a more comprehensive strategy for the organization before attempting to scale any further. Findings indicate many challenges facing the organization, in terms of brand identity, resources, fundraising, and marketing, that need to be urgently addressed.

The recommendations below are meant to be followed sequentially, with a priority on a stronger and more effective partnership with the board of directors that will drive additional strategic decision-making opportunities.

**Recommendation 1:** *FosterHope should reinvigorate their board of directors through recommitment or voluntary release of duties.*

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As FosterHope continues to expand in terms of programming, it needs a highly engaged and dedicated board of directors, with members who have the time and desire to lead and fulfill in-depth organizational projects. Unfortunately, while the current board members have a long history with the organization's commitment to YFC in the county, life priorities have shifted and some can no longer dedicate themselves to FosterHope as they once did.

Organizations often face issues with board members who do less than their fair share, and in most cases, nonprofit leadership must decide if and how to remedy the situation. In the case of FosterHope, a reinvigoration of the board of directors needs to occur.

The organization should consider developing a board engagement strategy to better understand the activity level of each member, their availability to commit to FosterHope, what types of projects they want to work on in the future, and most importantly, if they want to continue as a member of the FosterHope board.

From there, Cindy and Ginger can follow up with each member over the phone to review their survey answers and determine the most appropriate course of action. If the member wants to continue as part of the board, Cindy and Ginger can review expectations and encourage them to sign a recommitment form that outlines specific roles and responsibilities for which they are accountable. If a member makes it known that they do not want to continue as part of the FosterHope board, Cindy and Ginger can discuss either taking a short break to resolve personal or professional issues or having them completely removed.

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Given some members' lack of response or slow response time, another strategy would be to wait until certain board members' terms are up and then write a letter stating that their term will not be renewed.

This strategy not only provides certain overcommitted board members with a way to graciously yield their duties, but also allows the organization to find new members who have enough time to commit to specific areas including fundraising and marketing.

***Recommendation 2: With renewed commitment from the board of directors, FosterHope should develop an organizational strategy that includes updated mission, vision, and values statements, a revised organizational structure, and forward-looking financial planning.***

To better understand where the organization is going and how it plans to get there, the board and the administration need to work together to strategically plan for the future. One area of research that might be beneficial to FosterHope is the idea of cultivating and understanding the ecosystem in which they exist (Bloom & Dees, 2008). This framework highlights the importance of nonprofits changing the system that creates and sustains the problems they are working to eradicate. This includes an activity where social entrepreneurs create a map of all the players and environmental conditions that affect their nonprofit, as well as the relationships between them. The first step in this exercise is to define their theory of change, based on a few key questions:

- "What do we want to accomplish?"
- "How will achieving this result make society a better place?"
- "What's the first step on the path to this change?"

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- “How will taking this step get us closer to our goal?”
- “Why do we believe that this step will lead to change?”

This process could help FosterHope better orient themselves within the context of the environment in which they work and help the board and administration unify around a strategic scaling plan.

After the ecosystem activity grounding, FosterHope needs to revisit the organization’s mission, vision, and values statements. Ideally, planning would be completed with the help of an organizational or communications consultant, but the administration could also choose to lead the initiative without outside help.

The mission statement should explain why FosterHope exists by defining the organizational goals. Several times during our communications, Cindy mentioned that a main goal of FosterHope was to help youth in foster care “move from crisis to stability,” but upon investigation, this language did not appear anywhere on the website or in brand assets. This is a strong statement that can act as the main pillar for messaging around mission.

Similarly, a clear and succinct vision statement should describe FosterHope’s vision to internal and external audiences, including youth in foster care, those in foster services at the county level, and donors. The goal is to provide a cohesive perspective on the future of the organization should all goals be achieved. FosterHope does not currently have a vision statement; the closest thing I found was the About Us section of the brand deck, which states, “FosterHope provides for the physical, educational,

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psychological, reunification needs and extracurricular activities for children in the welfare system.”

While this capstone is not focused on the development of message for FosterHope, I have provided some insights for potential mission, vision, and values statements that can act as thought starters for future iterations.

### **Our Mission**

The mission of FosterHope is to provide emotional, educational and tangible support to help foster youth navigate from crisis to stability.

The organization works to fulfill this mission through several programs including:

- PREPARE Life Skills Training
- Housing Navigator Resources
- Mentoring Programs
- Transportation Resources
- Emergency, Educational and Extracurricular Funding

### **Our Vision**

Every youth aging out of the foster care system has the opportunity for a healthy and successful life.

### **Our Values**

At FosterHope, we are driven by our faith and encourage:

- Dedication to serving youth in foster care
- Dignity and respect
- Trust and collaboration
- Ethical behavior
- Accountability

Additionally, it will be important for FosterHope to develop an adapted organizational structure that outlines not only all current paid and volunteer positions, but also those roles that need to be filled in the future. The new organizational chart should broadly outline roles and responsibilities for board members through committee assignments, position the executive director as liaison to the board and supervisor of the administration, and include director roles for individual areas including finance, development, operations, marketing, human resources, and public affairs/advocacy

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efforts. By assigning roles in this manner, FosterHope will not only highlight reporting lines, but also see gaps in resources and develop plans to recruit and fill those roles.

Finally, the development of a budget for FosterHope is foundational to its success.

One of the major concerns that arose from the interviews was the lack of funds to hire staff that could help the organization achieve its goals. Yet, without a budget, there is no real way to see whether the issue is a lack of funding or inefficient financial management. If there is really an issue with lack of funding, the organization can focus more on development activities, but if there are real issues with managing finances, they can dive into the finances to better determine the problem.

By developing a mission, vision, and values statement, in coordination with a revised organizational structure and budget process, FosterHope will be more equipped to begin evaluating other areas of the organization, including development, fundraising, and advertising—all important elements that must be completed before any scaling project commences.

**Recommendation 3: FosterHope should prioritize the development of a comprehensive fundraising strategy.**

The creation of a development plan is key to the success of FosterHope. While the budgeting process will determine organizational revenue and expenses, the process of developing a fundraising strategy addresses how much money the organization will need to raise to meet proposed goals. First, the organization should begin by auditing its current fundraising strategy, including highlighting major current and prospective donors and pulling out any insights that could help with future efforts. Research could



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be conducted on previous donors to get a better sense of who these people are and what motivates them to donate to FosterHope. The organization could also consider holding donor focus groups or conducting donor interviews specifically to understand why they donate and what it would take to give to FosterHope on a monthly basis.

From there, the plan should identify fundraising opportunities throughout the year, create specific goals and evaluation metrics for each activity, and assign accountability to specific members of the team for activity success. Each opportunity should then be assessed post-event to determine if they met the success criteria.

While this capstone is not equipped to help FosterHope develop a fundraising strategy, I do recognize the necessity of creating a comprehensive plan that addresses both donor relations and grant-writing activities, as both are critical to the success of the organization.

**Recommendation 4: Develop a marketing and communications strategy with specific goals to drive organizational awareness, thought leadership, and fundraising activities.**

FosterHope needs a roadmap that outlines strategies and tactics necessary to achieve organizational goals. One of the biggest challenges facing the organization is that it is not widely known within the county outside of the foster community. The organization needs to increase its reach, engage more deeply with stakeholders, and drive fundraising initiatives by developing innovative media and digital communication plans.

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The first step in the process of developing a marketing plan is clearly defining the person or group that oversees marketing. Because of the large amount of effort related to strategizing, implementing, and measuring marketing programs, ideally this responsibility would be attributed to a new board member, new hire, or volunteer consultant who manages the programs entirely.

Once that person is identified, the second step would be to audit previous marketing programs to get a better sense of what was successful in the past. The audit would also look at landscape or competitor organizations to get a sense of how other organizations in the space are marketing and who is donating to these institutions. Insights should be curated and leveraged to drive the marketing strategy.

The third step would be creating specific goals for marketing initiatives aligned with the strategic plan developed in Recommendation 1. For example, if one of the goals of the strategic plan involves reaching more high-profile donors, marketing goals could include tactics to identify, target, and engage a specific number of high-profile donors each year through unique events.

The fourth step would be developing messaging for FosterHope to be pulled through the website, social media, and brand materials. The messaging should highlight the narrative around FosterHope's mission and include a FosterHope backgrounder, key messages, FAQs, value proposition, program details, executive bios, and press release boilerplates. The messaging can then be used in media pitches and social media content, on the website, and across brand assets.

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Once the messaging is complete, the organization should take a calendar approach to marketing activities throughout the year. By developing one or two big initiatives per year and peppering in smaller campaigns and fundraising opportunities, FosterHope can target different stakeholders with relevant tactics and at the same time manage resources more efficiently.

For example, May is National Foster Care Month, so it would make sense for the organization's most impactful marketing and fundraising events to be planned during May. The marketing head would then determine the goals for the campaign and decide how a theme would play out across different platforms, including media, events, and social media.

As a side note, social media should play a large part in the communications strategy for FosterHope. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram are highly influential in driving donations, and LinkedIn is helpful to build awareness and thought leadership within the local business community. While the organization has channels, the posting cadence is not regular, content reach is not maximized, and engagement is low. Cindy mentioned that they are currently working with Pepperdine undergraduate students on putting together a social media strategy, which will be helpful in outlining how they can move forward, but hiring someone or finding a dedicated volunteer to manage content and channel engagement in the long run will also be necessary.

Finally, measurement of marketing efforts will also be important to determine effectiveness and return on investment of programs. Different sets of metrics should be developed for each marketing platform (i.e., social media should include impressions,

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reach, engagement, etc.) and monthly benchmark reports should be completed to better understand how efforts are impacting business goals.

Ideally, with a marketing plan in place, FosterHope will be able to increase awareness in the community and in turn, drive fundraising return, allowing for more hiring and the continued expansion of programs for YFC.

### **Recommendation 5: FosterHope should develop a plan for staff and volunteer development.**

One of the concerns presented by interviewees was that while the FosterHope team was very dedicated to helping YFC, no one had much experience in nonprofit management. Once the board of directors is recommitted, it would be beneficial to determine the expertise gaps and provide relevant training for those members so that they are more equipped to attain the goals set out in the strategic plan.

Additionally, as executive director, Cindy is expected to act as the face of leadership for the organization. The community values her legal expertise, but many are also looking to her to effectively manage the administration of the organization. She must expertly communicate the organization's mission and vision, build lasting relationships with key stakeholders, and be the ever-present fundraiser. The organization must invest in Cindy to develop her knowledge of nonprofit management and fundraising, while at the same time training directors under her to expertly manage areas like HR, finance, and marketing.

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It is also important to note that team development should be an ongoing process. Specific areas of development can be identified during a performance evaluation process, discussed in more depth below.

**Recommendation 6: FosterHope should develop formal evaluation systems for the board of directors, staff, volunteers, and programs.**

FosterHope has no formal evaluation systems in place and therefore has no way to measure effectiveness of team members or programs. Without these insights, scaling operations becomes very dangerous because there is no indication of whether the growing programs, and the people running them, have any positive impact on business goals.

In terms of team members, the board of directors, staff, and volunteers should all complete basic evaluation processes at least twice per year. These processes would include self-evaluation, performance appraisals, and general check-ins to ensure that morale and motivation are high. Given the recent concerns over board performance, ongoing evaluations could be very beneficial in understanding any frustrations and performance issues, as well as giving individuals the opportunity to present and discuss ideas for improving team and staff development and culture.

Volunteers could also take part in these evaluations. Those who participate frequently could be asked to fill out self-evaluation surveys or response cards that ask for their thoughts on how volunteer activities can be more efficiently organized and implemented.

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Evaluation of programs is also extremely important for FosterHope. For example, when examining programs like ILP and Mentoring, the needs of YFC are consistently evolving; what might be relevant today may not be in a year or two. Therefore, consistent feedback is the key to program success. FosterHope needs to facilitate a conversation between YFC, social workers, foster parents, and other stakeholders to evaluate whether its programs are still valuable to the community. This feedback will allow the organization to adjust the programs as necessary and continue to positively impact YFC. Similar evaluations can be run on fundraising programs to facilitate feedback from donors as to why they donate to the organization and what would make them give even more.

Ideally, an expert in evaluation would help FosterHope to set up evaluation processes and then train them on how to implement them without additional help.

**Recommendation 7: Once Recommendations 1-6 are completed, FosterHope should re-evaluate scaling desires, goals, and opportunities.**

FosterHope has a talented team committed to helping YFC navigate from crisis to stability. Because the organization exhibits characteristics of social bricolage, FosterHope has been especially sharp in curating and leveraging resources to positively impact YFC. However, as previously addressed in the literature review, a sole reliance on existing resources in lieu of formal planning can sometimes preclude social bricoleurs from addressing larger needs, including structure and process, limiting their ability to scale. For FosterHope, the concern is that while there is a desire to expand, the organization does not have the structure in place to do so successfully and sustainably. But should FosterHope take the steps necessary to increase strategic

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planning, fundraising, marketing, and staff development efforts, they may find themselves in a strong position to develop a scaling strategy that works to create long-lasting and significant social change.

Given all that I have learned about the organization, including deep insights around current programs and future goals, it seems as though FosterHope would benefit from an integrated scaling out and scaling up strategy. The current programming around long-lasting and impactful life skills and relationships, coupled with skill building and long-term housing, highlights a way FosterHope could scale out by recruiting more YFC in the county to participate in its classes. Additionally, the focus on advocacy and digging more deeply to institutionally change how the legal system represents YFC is an example of how FosterHope could simultaneously scale up. Both represent viable paths toward positively impacting more YFC.

### **Conclusions**

This project was conducted to provide FosterHope with recommendations on how the organization can scale in a way that creates change within the foster care system of the county while continuing to serve the everyday needs of local YFC. Document analysis and employee interviews highlighted some important findings that differed from initial expectations for recommendations. While FosterHope has a strong commitment to improving the lives of YFC and a desire to scale in both organizational size and programming, findings highlighted several steps that must be taken prior to any further conversations about scaling. FosterHope must:

- Address the lack of board involvement through reinvigoration, either through recommitment or release of duties.

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- Realign organizational discrepancies regarding the current vision for FosterHope's future by developing an organizational strategy that includes updated mission, vision, and values statements, a revised organizational structure, and forward-looking financial planning.
- Protect the sustainability of important programming by developing both short- and long-term strategic plans for marketing and fundraising activities.
- Develop a plan for staff and volunteer development that includes formal evaluation systems for the board of directors, staff, volunteers, and programs.

While there is both external and internal interest in scaling, FosterHope is not ready and will not have the resources to effectively scale until the above actions are completed. FosterHope will ultimately determine if, when, and how to implement the proposed recommendations, but should they move forward with scaling without taking into account these considerations, the organization risks a loss of focus, culture coherence, and overall organizational stability.

It is important to note that there are limitations to the findings in this study: most importantly, the small number of interviews. I secured fewer interviews than expected because of busy schedules impacted by COVID-19, resulting in several higher-priority tasks for many potential interviewees. Additionally, because of the limited interest from potential interviewees, I did not conduct a quantitative survey that would have provided anonymous insights. If additional research is conducted in the future by FosterHope internally or through an outside partner, this addition is highly recommended.



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It is my hope to stay involved with FosterHope in the future, by providing additional guidance around the implementation of the recommendations and development of the strategic plans.

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### APPENDIX A: Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Stephanie Holbrook and I am completing a Doctorate degree at Vanderbilt University. As part of my Capstone project, I am conducting a project with FosterHope to help determine how the organization can scale in a way that meets both the short and long-term needs of youth in foster care.

As part of this project, I am interested in interviewing you to gather data on your experience as a member of the staff. Your participation will involve one informal Zoom interview that will last between 30 minutes and 1 hour. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

My project and its results will be seen by the faculty of Peabody College at Vanderbilt University who comprise the Capstone review panel. A copy of the thesis will also be kept on file in the library at Vanderbilt University.

Should you agree to participate, please know that I will do everything I can to protect your privacy. Your identity or personal information will be anonymized and will not be disclosed in any publication that may result from the study. The audio and video of the interview will be recorded via Zoom and notes will be taken; all interview data that I collect will be kept confidential in password-protected files that will be destroyed upon completion of the project.

You will not receive any form of reimbursement for your participation in the interview; however, should you or anyone wish to view my Capstone upon its completion, I would be happy to provide you with a copy of the finished product.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me either by email at [stephanie.holbrook@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:stephanie.holbrook@vanderbilt.edu) or by phone.

Thanks,  
Stephanie



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### APPENDIX B: Interview Protocol

Prior to each interview the following information was reviewed:

This project is working in collaboration with FosterHope to determine if and how the organization should scale.

Please understand the following:

- Your participation is voluntary.
- You may cancel or stop the interview at any time without penalty.
- All information collected will be anonymized.
- There are no known risks associated with participation in this study.

Do you have any questions about the above information?

I would like to record this video session. Do I have permission to record our conversation?

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### APPENDIX C: Interview Questions

#### *Founders and Board of Directors*

*The following questions will be posed to FosterHope founders and members of Board of Directors.*

- How has this organization changed over its history?
- What do you want to achieve in the future in terms of growth?
- Do you see this organization moving into additional areas beyond its current scope? Describe these.
- What changes would the organization need to make to the current structure to achieve goals related to growth?
- What special advantages does the organization have that make it uniquely suited to achieve goals related to growth?
- What challenges face the organization that might hinder the ability to meet social impact goals?
- What opportunities would the organization gain by moving from a "scaling out" to "scaling up" strategy?
- What risks, if any, can be identified as a result of scaling up?

#### *Volunteers and Staff*

*The following questions will be posed to FosterHope volunteers and staff:*

- *How has the organization changed since you began working/volunteering?*
- *What do you think the organization can do in order to better meet the needs of YFC?*
- *What changes would you recommend making to the current structure of FosterHope in order to reach those goals?*
- *How do you think FosterHope is uniquely suited to change the way the current foster system within the county functions?*

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- *If FosterHope were to focus less on meeting the short-term needs of YFC and more on creating systematic change within the foster system, where are the current opportunities to create the most impact?*
- *If FosterHope were to focus less on meeting the short-term needs of YFC and more on creating systematic change within the foster system, what do you perceive as some of the risks?*

### *County IPL Representatives*

- How do you work with FosterHope?
- How has this organization changed over its history?
- Do you see this organization moving into additional areas beyond its current scope? Describe these.
- What changes would the organization need to make to the current structure to achieve goals related to growth?
- What special advantages does the organization have that make it uniquely suited to achieve goals related to growth?
- What challenges face the organization that might hinder the ability to meet social impact goals?
- What opportunities would the organization gain by moving from a "scaling out" to "scaling up" strategy?
- What risks, if any, can be identified as a result of scaling up?

### *Potential Donors*

- How did you learn about FosterHope?
- Why do you feel comfortable giving to the organization?
- How do you find out about donation opportunities?
- Would you continue to donate to FosterHope instead of tangible emergency items or requests?
- What special advantages does the organization have that make it unique?

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- If the organization stopped providing emergency funding to YFC, how do you think that would affect the organization? Would you still give?
- What if those funds were going to programming that made a long-term impact on the life of YFC? Would you still give?

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**APPENDIX D: Coding Table**

Code Descriptor	Code	Research Question (s)	
Approach, Short-Term to Long-Term Impact Approach, Lack of Org. Structure and Process Approach, Board Concerns Approach, Staffing Concerns Approach, Org. Stability Concerns	ASTLT ALOSP ABC ASC OSC	<i>How has FosterHope grown since inception?</i>  <i>What is the current vision for the future of FosterHope?</i>	Approach
Strength, Commitment Strength, Executive Director Strength, Programming Strength, Flexibility  PS, Long-Term Programming PS, Audience Expansion PS, Legal and Advocacy	SC SED SP SF  PSLTP PSAE PSLA	<i>What are some of the opportunities the organization sees as possibilities for greater impact?</i>	Strengths/ Pathway to Scaling
Challenge, Need for Strategic Planning Challenge, Lack of Organizational Structure Challenge, Financial Sustainability Challenge, Lack of Systems Challenge, Skill Development Challenge, Staffing Concerns Challenge, Culture Concerns  Risk, Dilution of Mission Risk, Organizational Stability	CSP CLOS CFS CLS CSD CSC CCC  RSM ROS	<i>What evidence do they see of gaps in their current operations?</i>	Challenges/Risks

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**APPENDIX E: Summary of Data Collected**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Data Collected</b>	<b>Framework Category</b>
<i>How has FosterHope grown since inception?</i>	Interviews, brand presentation, marketing materials and social media channel content	Approach
<i>What is the current vision for the future of FosterHope?</i>	Interviews, brand presentation, marketing materials and social media channel content	Approach
<i>What are some of the opportunities the organization sees as possibilities for greater impact?</i>	Interviews, brand presentation, marketing materials	Strengths/Pathways to Scaling
<i>What evidence do they see of gaps in their current operations?</i>	Interviews, brand presentation	Challenges/Risks