

Social Problem

There are approximately 7,000 people without a safe or consistent place to sleep in Mecklenburg County. This number has risen with declining economic trends, making homelessness one of Charlotte’s most pressing community issues. There are now 42 dedicated organizations in the area’s Homeless Services Network. Most homeless individuals have a variety of needs but do not know the breadth of resources available. While resources exist, there is little coordinated outreach to make homeless people aware of the many ways they can get help.

Proposed Opportunity/Solution

We propose to build a network of shared information that connects homeless citizens to resources for overcoming their needs. Solution InSight’s service for homeless persons includes individualized strategic plans complete with tactical steps to improve the individual’s situation and lifestyle based on needs and personal history. The social initiative will: provide thousands of homeless individuals with awareness and problem-solving strategies to better equip them for success; make Charlotte’s homeless efforts more connected, targeted, and logical by tracking current resources and maintaining contact with homeless organizations; conduct research detailing most common needs, history, and goals of homeless persons. Conversations with several directors serving homeless organizations have indicated that the community could greatly benefit from coordinated homeless planning. The revenue program will connect Charlotte’s nonprofit community while generating funds for homeless outreach. Our paid website service will allow nonprofits, large and small, to benefit from shared best practices in running a cause-driven enterprise.

Social Benefit

The program offers **strategic planning reports** to homeless citizens by interpreting their histories and critical needs in order to connect them with community resources. Organizations serving Charlotte’s homeless will help identify our homeless citizens to engage them in the process. Success depends upon our intimate knowledge of resources available for the homeless. This will require close relationships with each organization, as well as research and analysis to determine key resources.

Our research team will track and produce information about available solutions for homeless persons. We plan to recruit 20 members on the research team by the initial launch, and 50 by the end of year one. The management team will collaborate with directors of relevant organizations to seek support in distributing our “Situation Form” to homeless individuals. We will also designate days for teams of college student volunteers to reach out to homeless camps in order to assist homeless people who do not frequent Charlotte’s Homeless Services Network.

Directors at the various organizations will receive copies of *Solution InSight’s* “Situation Form”, which homeless individuals may fill out to inform us of their relevant history and most critical needs. Each homeless person will be given a five-dollar bus pass as an incentive for completing the form. Directors will forward the completed forms to us for processing. Report contents will be generated by the research team; these members will generate tactical plans by navigating Solution InSight’s “Opportunity Databases”, which will be prepared by the management team before the launch date in 2013.

Each report will be delivered in the form of a lightweight notebook. The notebook will detail resources pertinent to each homeless individual’s needs and paths to improvement. The goal within the first year is to distribute 1,000 personalized reports to homeless individuals.

Another phase of impact will manifest in research. Data forms will be consolidated into analyses of homeless commonalities. The analysis will address the most common factors within the homeless population. Findings will be shared through an awareness campaign launched through social media, the website, and media interviews. The studies will increase the understanding of homeless issues in order to help Charlotte and cities nationwide form more progressive models for dealing with homelessness.

After first year’s operations prove successful, the Solution InSight will expand to increase impact. Potentially, the model could branch out to be used in other cities and colleges. Plans include extending the program to other university locations throughout the state, then the Southeast, and ultimately the nation.

Projected Costs- 2013		
Need	Cost	Specification
Bus Passes	\$5,000	1,000 at \$5 per pass
Notebooks for Homeless Persons	\$4,500	1,000 at \$4.50 per notebook
Printing Materials	\$2,000	1,000 reports at \$2 per report
Recruitment & Training Materials	\$500	50 at \$10 per volunteer
Website Costs	\$500	Domain registration and maintenance
Promotional Materials	\$400	400 printed handouts at \$1 per unit
Database and Research Software	\$200	Subscription to data processing software
Total	\$13,100	

Revenue Model/Financial Plan

The revenue generator for Solution InSight will be a website offering resources to nonprofits and employees in the Charlotte area. Website contents fall into seven categories: (1) Success stories about events, programs, or processes written by nonprofit managers; (2) advice for nonprofit enhancement written by consultants or professionals; (3) opportunities for involvement or volunteering submitted by nonprofit members; (4) needs and requests of nonprofit members; (5) access to a social forum for members; (6) job board and resume posting for nonprofit employment; and (7) host the database of information on homeless persons so that agencies serving them can track services for consistent care and avoid duplication and abuse of resources.

For the premium membership, nonprofits pay \$10 a month, while individuals pay \$5 per month. The website will have a basic (free) membership that accesses only the first two of the seven categories of membership. This way, all nonprofits can be involved at some capacity whether or not they commit to the subscription. Nonprofits and people affiliated with them have no vehicle for communication in Charlotte. Thus, there is very little shared development and few mutually beneficial relationships. There is currently no service similar to what the site will provide.

Participation will allow nonprofits to benefit from information sharing, cooperation, and networking with each other. Individuals seeking nonprofit employment will be able to access our job board to make themselves known to employers.

The management team will spend this academic year contacting area nonprofits to collect content for the website. Once the website is launched in August 2013, nonprofits will begin paying for the service.

For the first year, we anticipate premium memberships at 300 individuals and 150 nonprofit organizations. If this goal is achieved, it will generate \$36,000 within the first 12 months of operation. Initial startup capital will be funded by an \$8,000 grant from the Leon Levine Foundation. In total, first year revenue will amount to \$44,000. This will leave us with \$30,900 after the first year (subtracting \$13,100 in startup costs) to invest in expanding the reach of the company. Next steps will be to host networking events for nonprofits, increase the number of reports for homeless individuals, and provide additional resources for clients.

Market Analysis

Solution InSight will focus marketing efforts for the paid subscription on nonprofits, nonprofit employees, and job seekers.

There are over 1,400 nonprofits in Mecklenburg County. Nonprofit members will be the top priority target market, as the service will not function without their participation. To attract these organizations, the management team will first attend networking meetings and nonprofit niche groups, such as the *Care Ring*, a collaboration of low-income health providers, and the *Homeless Services Network*. Another method will be to tap into UNC Charlotte networks to get higher profile nonprofits involved. Around two-thirds of our management team has completed a local nonprofit internship, and the connections that team members have made will prove beneficial to the cause. After networking with groups of nonprofits, the team will begin to contact prospective nonprofit members individually to discuss the merits of the service and to procure submissions for website content.

There is a total employment of 26,405 people in Mecklenburg County's nonprofit sector. Social media will be a significant component of the team's effort to connect to these employees. The team will reach out to nonprofit employees primarily through LinkedIn®, Facebook®, and Twitter®.

In terms of securing members who are interested in working in the nonprofit field, online marketing will also be a major factor. To turn employment seekers into new members, we will advertise the service through local job boards and forums in addition to social media hubs. The main promotion within this category, however, will be reaching out to graduate students and recent college graduates with majors that indicate an interest in nonprofit employment.

The website has no known competitors. Currently, no organization serves to unify the nonprofit services to the community as a whole. The challenge of profitability will not be about a lack of market opportunity, but about whether or not an adequate amount of nonprofits will back the service and encourage others to get involved, which will require strategic promotion on our end.

Launch Strategy

Before launching the service, the Solution InSight management team will complete multiple tasks: Recruit 20 qualified students from UNC Charlotte to join research team; create training program for student researchers; develop a collection of databases to locate effective resources; connect with organizations around Charlotte; develop website and conduct marketing campaign.

Recruitment of volunteers and promotion of services will be the primary focus during the launch phase. Volunteer recruitment will be coordinated by reaching out to UNC Charlotte student organizations. Management will also conduct a social media campaign in order to appeal to student volunteers. To promote the services to nonprofit clients, the team will begin setting up and attending meetings with nonprofits around Charlotte. Another component to the company's success will be through strategic partnerships with affluent individuals. The team has already secured a meeting with Harvey Gantt, the first African-American mayor of Charlotte, and will soon be in discussions with Leon Levine, founder of Family Dollar. Support of prominent individuals will help propel marketing efforts to optimal efficiency.

By training volunteers, making resources known to individuals, connecting nonprofits, and producing research, Solution InSight could serve as a national model for ensuring connectivity among nonprofits and facilitating homeless empowerment.