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# 2021 – 2023 **STRATEGIC PLAN**

*From Vision to Results*



**OUR CIRCLE**  
Making a Difference Together!

**BACKGROUND.....2**

Mission.....2

Vision.....2

Who Are We.....3

What We Do.....3

Values.....4

Objective .....4

Current Programs.....4

**STRATEGIC GOALS: KEY STEPS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.....5**

Further develop our profile as Our Circle.....6

Re-develop our existing quality standards, ensuring it reflects emerging  
good practice.....8

Develop a quality assured engagement and outreach model through a  
strategic partnership with key agencies.....10

Further develop LGBT community supports.....13

Advocate for the needs of LGBT-formed family units at a national level.....14

Our Circle will maintain Good Standing governance status.....17

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT WITH VISION.....18**

**OUR CIRCLE’S SWOT ANALYSIS.....19**

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

A plan without people is just that--a plan. A plan which integrates people and actions into its core becomes a strategy, and that is what Our Circle has created. It has been five years since Our Circle crafted and adopted its first strategic plan. In the intervening years local activists have made tremendous strides in advancing the way of life for LGBT persons in Belize.

Local LGBT civil society groups have conducted numerous interventions geared towards empowering and educating the LGBT community about their rights and responsibilities.

Government entities have involved LGBT civil society groups in various levels of policy and legislative consultations, geared to create a more inclusive and safer society for the LGBT community.

Industry has become more willing to sponsor programs geared towards the overall efforts of the LGBT community, acknowledging the value of the "LGBT dollar" in Belize.

There has never been a more helpful time for those of us dedicated to creating equality for LGBT persons in Belize. By sharing their stories, participating in research and advocating tirelessly, these courageous people serve as the engine of this progress.

Our Circle is proud to sit at the interface of these communities, and over the past five years we ourselves have learned much about our work with LGBT-formed family units: how we can most effectively harness this engine to drive support, sensitization and advocacy to meet both immediate and long-term needs of our families, while also translating technical advances into lay language to stimulate the funding, engagement and partnerships needed to reach our goals.

It is within this context that Our Circle's Board, staff and volunteers have crafted a plan for the next three years that is both aspirational and sound. This plan calls upon the strengths of all of these stakeholders, integrating and leveraging partnerships and assets to build upon current momentum and ensure progress that is both efficient and effective. With family as our central dogma, we welcome this new era of change and progress, united under the banner of dignity, inclusion, compassion, respect, equity and equality.

I call upon each person reading this plan to identify a role you can take on to help ensure our success. We welcome you as partners in this important work, and pledge to work tirelessly to realize a more hopeful future that includes lived and legal inclusion of LGBT-formed family units in Belize.

With belief in a better tomorrow,



Abner Recinos  
OC Board Chair

October 26th, 2020

## BACKGROUND

Our Circle is thrilled to launch our new Strategic Plan! With leadership change, growth in programs, and the increased spotlight on LGBT-formed families nationally, this plan charts a bold vision of Our Circle's future. Building on the strength of our organization, we invested in this process, diving deep into gathering our community's feedback. We are deeply grateful to the community members, volunteers, staff, and a variety of other stakeholders who took the time to share their experiences, hopes, and frustrations to create a plan that guides Our Circle's future. This plan is our "North Star," and clearly outlines a three-year vision of our most impactful work to serve our growing and diverse community. We are ecstatic to have a road map to empower Our Circle to be an even brighter light for our beautiful, diverse, robust Belizean LGBT community. Onward to Our Circle's next exciting chapter!

Our Circle is a national organization underpinned by localized knowledge and responses. We provide support, training, and advocacy which speak to national priorities and improve the lives of LGBT-formed family units in Belize. Our strong communication and advocacy strategies are key to who we are. We have also shown the value of Our Circle working in partnership with other national providers to reduce duplication and ensure that resources for LGBT formed family units have the most impact. In the next strategic period, we plan on utilizing our expertise gained through the development of the helpline to further develop our collective approach to training and national advocacy. All our efforts are directed toward achieving the following vision and mission:

### Mission

The mission of Our Circle is to advance legal and lived equality for LGBT-formed family units, and for those who wish to form them, through building community, changing hearts and minds, and driving policy change.

### Vision

A Belizean society where all LGBT-formed family units, regardless of creation or composition, live in communities that recognize, respect, protect, and value them.

## Who We Are

Our Circle is a national organization that provides quality services to family units formed by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) persons across the country. Informed by the issues and experiences raised through our frontline services, we also provide training and advocacy support, to enhance the visibility, inclusion, and rights of LGBT-formed families living in Belize. Our Circle's frontline work is delivered by our network of extensively trained volunteers. The services are supported by Our Circle's staff team and the organization's Working Board of Directors.

## What We Do

### **Support**

Our Circle provides confidential and non judgemental support and information through peer support services housed at the Our Circle Resource Center. LGBT people are recognized as a group at risk of mental health difficulties of which can be compounded by isolation and lack of social support. Since the Resource Center was established in 2017, the service has supported hundreds of people.

### **Sensitization**

Our Circle has been providing sensitization to voluntary and statutory agencies and community groups for many years. Our Circle has a wealth of experience of sensitization in relation to LGBT-formed family equality and service provision. Over this next strategic period, we plan to further develop a range of modularised national sensitization programs to relevant quality standards.

### **Advocacy**

Informed by the issues and experiences raised in our frontline services, and together with independent research, Our Circle is committed to advocating for the rights of all LGBT-formed family units in Belize. We will pay particular attention to those who may face additional barriers including, migrants and family units in rural Belize so that they too can enjoy family equality.

## Values

**Dignity** – Building pride, self-respect, and mutual-respect in everyone.

**Inclusion** – Welcoming and serving all members of our community.

**Compassion** – Caring about the needs of others and supporting them from a place of kindness and willingness to help.

**Respect** – Meeting, listening to, and acknowledging our community on its own terms; honoring each as a whole person.

**Equity & Equality** – Advocating for and intentionally reducing barriers to fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all families, inside and outside our organization.

## Objectives

**Advocate** for inclusion and protection of LGBT-formed family units, as well as necessary legal reform

**Expansion** of services being offered by the Our Circle Resource Center

**Research** the needs of LGBT-formed family units

**Partnership** with NGOs and state agencies with similar mandates

**Educate** LGBT community, allies and stakeholders about data and research done on LGBT-formed family units

**Outreach** with more LGBT-formed family units and supporters

## Current Programs

Founded in 2013, Our Circle has been guided by four priority areas: **LGBT safe space, LGBT family education and awareness, organizational networking** and **capacity building**. Galvanized by the need to dismantle systemic exclusion of LGBT-formed family units in Belize. Since then, Our Circle has channeled more than \$490,000 USD into finding durable solutions to create visibility and inclusion of this population. We currently house the only LGBT Resource Center in the country of Belize and have supported 8 major projects. Projects have historically been in the areas of capacity

development of LGBT persons, sensitization of stakeholders, LGBT-formed family unit research, lobbying for legal and policy reform, and providing safe spaces for LGBT-formed family units.

Globally and in the region, Our Circle also has always sought to increase public awareness and understanding of LGBT-formed family units in Belize.

- A. Capacity Development of LGBT Persons
- B. Sensitization of Stakeholders
- C. LGBT-formed Family Unit Research
- D. Lobbying for Legal and Policy Reform
- E. Providing Safe Spaces for LGBT-formed Family Units

Currently, Our Circle is working to achieve 3 United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which include ***good health and well being (SDG3)***, ***gender equality (SDG5)***, and ***peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16)***. The SDGs define the world we want. They apply to all nations, including Belize, to ensure that no one is left behind. There are 17 SDGs, which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership.

## STRATEGIC GOALS: KEY STEPS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Over the coming three years, the work of Our Circle will be guided by the following six strategic goals:

1. Further develop our profile as Our Circle.
2. Re-develop our existing quality standards, ensuring it reflects emerging good practice.
3. Develop a quality assured engagement and outreach model through a strategic partnership with key agencies.
4. Further develop LGBT community supports
5. Advocate for the needs of LGBT-formed family units at a national level.
6. Our Circle will maintain Good Standing governance status.

Common to each of these six goals are three key principles: firstly, the need to accessibly provide services to LGBT-formed family units, wherever they live; secondly, a desire to undertake all work to relevant quality standards and thirdly, that all of our work is informed by our national services.

The key steps and performance indicators relating to each strategic goal are outlined in the tables over the following pages.

## 1. Further develop our profile as Our Circle

Critical to the overall financial success of Our Circle will increase unrestricted revenue and seek to build a more fundamental partnership relationship with donors. This will provide unrestricted funding for operations through a specified spending policy that provides growth as well as current use monies. Such a plan will require a paradigm shift away from private restricted funding towards a broader private donor base, moving from 90:10 restricted/unrestricted ratio to a 75:25 restricted/ unrestricted ratio by 2023.

Our Circle seeks to be the preeminent Belizean LGBT organization focused on providing legal and lived equality for LGBT-formed family units in Belize; Our Circle's Resource Center to be the center for LGBT-formed family units' resources in Belize. Reaching our 2023 goals requires raising the profile of Our Circle through known and new audiences. This requires aggressive new media and traditional media outlets, and marketing campaigns. New branding will provide a single look, consistency in material and message, and a connection to the field through website personalization and field products to build success.

Building on clear branding, a well-targeted communications strategy, and careful donor cultivation, Our Circle will embark on a capital campaign in 2021 to build an annex to the 14 New Road (l/f) facility at \$125,000 USD.

Key Steps	Outcomes	Responsibilities	Timeline
Re-develop our brand to showcase our three core pillars of work: Support, Sensitization, and Advocacy.	New website and branding designed.  Strategic plan launched.  Increase in the number of contacts to our frontline services.	Director of Publicity  Strategic Planning Committee Center Coordinator	January 2021  November 2020  Monthly
Develop and roll out	Plan developed.	Board of Directors	April 2021



national marketing and engagement strategy to increase awareness of Our Circle's frontline services.	Increase the number of contacts to the services.	Center Coordinator	Monthly
	Increased national and regional media coverage (print and broadcast) achieved in relation to key advocacy issues.	Director of Publicity	Monthly
	Quarterly newsletters, e-communications and in-country materials developed.	Director of Publicity	Quarterly
	Prepare for and execute a capital campaign for expanding the Our Circle Resource Center.	Director of Fundraising	October 2022
Increase our unrestricted resource base.	Monthly fundraisers held.	Director of Fundraising	Monthly
	Monthly giving campaigns reenacted.	Director of Fundraising	December 2020
	Relationships with donors built.	Managing Director	Ongoing
	Board member introductions to funders through small gatherings and parlor parties.	Events Coordinator	Quarterly
	Living data system with regular updates and new donor prospects	Director of Fundraising	December 2020

	established.		
Promote the role and work of Our Circle at a local, national and international level.	Increased level of engagement with Local, National and International Fora relating to LGBT family units' inclusion and equality.  Increased research undertaken on diverse LGBT family unit's needs and used to influence national policy.	Managing Director  Consultant	Monthly  May 2021

## Overall Outcome

*Through increased awareness of our services, Our Circle becomes widely known as a Local safe space, National and Regional Support, Advocacy, and Sensitization organization on LGBT-formed family unit rights and inclusion.*

## 2. Re-develop our existing quality standards, ensuring it reflects emerging good practice.

The Board of Our Circle endeavors to regularly ensure that it provides timely and accurate support through updated policies and procedures; and improved facilities maintenance, management and expansion as warranted. In keeping with its mandate to attract, develop and retain clients, staff and volunteers, and to create a culture of organizational excellence Our Circle will continuously recognize and reward individual and team talents and contributions; while identifying, developing and implementing policies and procedures, intervention, and training to improve the quality of work life and the "culture" of the organization.

Key Steps	Outcomes	Responsibilities	Timeline
To review the existing quality standard and	Republished quality standards and the	Managing Director	January 2021

redevelop this in line with current and emerging good practice, to ensure we meet the highest standards in service provision.	development of accessible guidelines for volunteers.		
To ensure that the standards include clear guidance on good practice for engaging and supporting volunteers, including: induction, consultation, training and support, supervision, feedback and recognition.	The standards updated to include additional guidance on supporting and engaging volunteers.	Managing Director	January 2021
To develop and undertake an annual volunteer survey to measure engagement and support. Where issues are identified, the staff and Board will work to improve volunteer engagement.	Annual Volunteer Survey	Director of Program Development	Annually
To undertake an action plan to implement recommendations and support each service to attain the standard.	Action plan developed, each member service has access to required supports to meet the standard.	Director of Program Development	February 2021
Develop a review and audit process to ensure standards are maintained and further developed as required.	Monitoring process established, with each service reviewed under the process, during the lifetime of this plan.	Director of Program Development	Quarterly

## Overall Outcome

*Assurance reports attest to the fact that Our Circle's services meet the highest quality standards.*

### 3. Develop a quality assured engagement and outreach model through a strategic partnership with key agencies.

Through strategic partnerships, Our Circle will develop and reinforce networks, increase its capacity to operate at transnational level, share and confront ideas, practices and methods. Selected will produce tangible outputs which results will be disseminated of our activities. The strategic partnerships Our Circle will embark on are open to any type of organisation active in any field of education, training and youth, law, human rights or other socio-economic sectors as well as to organisations carrying out activities that are transversal to different fields (e.g. local and regional authorities, recognition and validation centres, chambers of commerce, trade organisations, guidance centres, cultural organisations).

Depending on the priority and the objectives addressed by projects, strategic partnerships will involve the most appropriate and diverse range of partners in order to benefit from their different experiences, profiles and specific expertise and to produce relevant and high quality project results.

Key Steps	Outcomes	Responsibilities	Timeline
To coordinate with National and Regional LGBT organisations to create a strategic partnership, to support the development and provision of a range of quality outreach and engagement packages for statutory & community agencies and groups across Belize.	Initial Memorandum of Understanding.	Managing Director	March 2021
Consult with key	Completed request for	Managing Director	May 2021

statutory agencies, on their LGBT sensitization needs, and garner support for the strategic partnership approach.	information needs analysis.		
Develop a business model detailing the process by which outreach and engagement is developed, provided and quality ensured by the strategic partners.	Business model completed, approved by board.	Community Engagement Officer	February 2021
Engage with MHDSTPA <sup>1</sup> to gain buy-in to the strategic partnership business model and reach agreement on the funding model, outcomes and other contracting issues.	MHDSTPA support gained for the strategic partnership business model.	Managing Director	February 2021
Based on the partners' expertise and existing resources, re-develop the range of sensitization programmes (face to face and blended) that meet identified sensitization needs. Each programme is accompanied by a Training for Trainers course and quality assurance process to ensure high quality training, wherever in	New sensitization programmes and resources developed.	Director of Program Development	August 2021

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Human Development Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation  
Our Circle Strategic Plan 2021 - 2023

Belize this is provided.			
Roll out the Training for Trainers programme with existing and new trainers to establish a quality assured national panel of trainers.	Trainers trained to quality standard.	Director of Program Development	October 2021
Publicise training availability to other small and large organisations and begin working online with the new model. Oversight in the first six months to be provided through monthly meetings.	Number of bookings from small and medium organisations.	Managing Director	Quarterly
Undertake an internal process evaluation to explore how the delivery and approach could be further improved for all stakeholders.	Process evaluation report for recommendations.	Director of Program Development	July 2022
Seek funding to undertake an outcome based evaluation. This to involve an interagency steering group including representatives from state agencies.	Evaluation report and recommendations.	Managing Director	October 2022

## Overall Outcome

*Statutory service providers can easily access quality assured LGBT-formed family unit awareness sessions, delivered by skilled trainers, who have direct experience of working with LGBT people and their families.*

#### 4. Further develop LGBT community based support.

In order to further develop LGBT community based support systems, covering not only LGBT persons, but also their families, Our Circle will actively work toward developing local communities where LGBT-formed family units can support each other, and improve the social inclusion of LGBT-formed family units country-wide.

Key Steps	Outcomes	Responsibilities	Timeline
<p>To further develop LGBT community based supports, such as peer to peer groups, in all six districts.</p> <p>Support this work through further development of a start-up and quality standard pack to better support new community groups to establish in line with recognised good practice. To provide training in this, as required.</p>	<p>New pack developed and training delivered.</p>	<p>Director of Program Development</p>	<p>August 2021</p>
<p>To support the development of at least one community based peer support group in each district, provided there is both need and interest.</p>	<p>no. of formal expressions of interest.</p> <p>no. of new groups established.</p>	<p>Director of Program Development</p>	<p>January 2022</p>
<p>To undertake a mapping and needs analysis, to assess the need for additional community supports. This will also identify state and NGO</p>	<p>Needs analysis and mapping completed. Strategy to address findings from the mapping and needs analysis.</p>	<p>Managing Director</p>	<p>March 2022</p>

partnerships that could further support the role out of community LGBT-led family units services in areas where there is a need and where we currently have no existing member services.			
To seek state or philanthropic funding to support further development of community based services, where these are not currently sufficient.	Funding for part time national support hours.	Director of Fundraising	June 2022

## Overall Outcome

*LGBT-formed family units in need of support, have access to high quality peer support groups, leading to reduced social isolation and improvements in wellbeing.*

### 5. Advocate for the needs of the LGBT-formed family units at national and regional levels.

In advocacy, linking national and regional levels enables more cohesion and more resources (human, financial, material, etc.) and can contribute to the solution to locked situations at national level by using the regional level to influence, convince or pressure national authorities. Our Circle acknowledges that advocating at the regional level can also be an alternative to the national level. At the same time, advocacy at the national level needs to be informed and guided by the national context without being locked to stringent regional advocacy priorities. The balance between cohesion and contextual flexibility is the key to successful linkages between the different levels of advocacy.

Key Steps	Outcomes	Responsibilities	Timeline
To hold a yearly seminar that will	Seminar with Our Circle's stakeholders,	Managing Director	Annually



<p>support identification of annual advocacy priorities, as well as provide an opportunity to feedback on existing priorities.</p> <p>These priorities will be informed by data from our frontline services in relation to emerging issues within the national Our Circle community.</p>	<p>including network members and volunteers. Policy and advocacy priorities identified.</p>		
<p>Quarterly stakeholder forums will allow for updates to stakeholders and additional engagement on advocacy priorities as required.</p>	<p>Stakeholders receive feedback on progression in relation to advocacy priorities.</p>	<p>Managing Director</p>	<p>Quarterly</p>
<p>Where required, new data or information may be collected to support understanding of issues for LGBT-formed family units in Belize.</p>	<p>New information on emerging issues to be collected where necessary</p>	<p>Managing Director</p>	<p>Monthly</p>
<p>To work collectively with other LGBT organisations to address arising issues for the LGBT-formed family units. Where organisations do not have the capacity, or influence to address emerging issues, Our Circle will engage with state agencies and</p>	<p>To develop collaborative action plans to address emerging issues where possible.</p>	<p>Managing Director</p>	<p>Quarterly</p>

departments, advocating for required change or resources.			
To actively engage with any national process or policy ensuring the voice of LGBT-formed family units are heard.	Our Circle is included in all national consultations.	Managing Director	Monthly
To work together with other LGBT organisations to set out the terms of reference for the development of a national LGBT-formed family unit strategy and advocate for this.	Agreement on a terms of reference for a national LGBT-formed family unit strategy.	Managing Director	Quarterly
To seek state support for the development of this strategy.	State support for development of a strategy	Managing Director	Quarterly
To be involved in the development of the strategy, with a particular focus on representing the needs of rural Belize.	Any strategies developed include the voice of rural LGBT people.	Managing Director	Quarterly

## Overall Outcome

*The needs of LGBT-formed family units are considered in all national and regional policy that affects their lives.*

## 6. Our Circle will maintain Good Standing governance status.

Our Circle's Board understands the range of opportunities and challenges now and into the future. The Board will seek to collaborate, be diverse and inclusive, and be strategic, connected and agile. In order for them to do so, there will need to be considerable

investment in NGO governance capabilities. This will include supporting board members to understand the basics of governance, building a cohort and community of excellent governors, providing practical support for the Chair, and connecting the board with tools (such as board self-appraisal and stakeholding mapping tools) to enhance their performance.

Equipping the Board with the necessary knowledge to govern the organization, the Board will be able to keep the organization in Good Standing.

Key Steps	Outcomes	Responsibilities	Timeline
To develop a step by step process to maintain Good Standing .	Included in the registry as compliant with the NGO Act.	Board Chair	January 2021
To ensure Our Circle is fully compliant with FIU.	FIU compliant reporting annually	Director of Finance	Annually
To undertake self-audit to create an action plan for any outstanding items to ensure compliance annually.	Self-audit completed and action plan developed.	Director of Finance	Annually

## Overall Outcome

*We have a strong fit for purpose governance structure that operates in line with all existing good practice standards.*

## STRATEGIC PLAN

### Alignment with Vision

**A Belizean society where all LGBT-formed family units, regardless of creation or composition, live in communities that recognize, respect, protect, and value them.**



## OUR CIRCLE'S SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Data Driven Interventions	Limited support from local LGBT organizations	Member of Belize Network of NGOs (BNN)	Working in a competitive environment as resources are being diminished
Community Safe Space	Belize City-centric	More room for discussion around LGBT-formed family units are being made available	Unstable source of finance
Strong relationships with government and stakeholders	Goal of organization easily misunderstood	Possibility of the Equal Opportunities Bill passing would support work being done	Government restriction and lack of political will to include and protect LGBT-formed family units
Experience at national and grassroots level work	Inconsistency in leadership	Revision of the Families and Children's Act through NCFC would be beneficial	Lack of interest/relatability at the community level
Supported by a Global Network	Limited engagement with NGOs having similar mandates in relation to family support	Census information to include term "partner" would build case for inclusion of LGBT persons and families in National Data	
Working Board of Directors	Not established as reputable service providers by our beneficiaries	Election 2020 may allow us to continue our work but on a new slate	
	Gaps in monitoring/evaluation mechanisms	Support from media and advocacy organizations	