



STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2023

AMIGOS DE SANTA CRUZ



DEAR FRIENDS,

We are pleased to share our 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. The plan presented in this document is based on the findings of thorough organizational assessments of our strengths and challenges, completed by the Amigos' Staff and Board in 2018. It is a road map for our work over the next three years. This plan identifies three critical strategic goals that reflect our organizational accomplishments of the last 20 years and where we hope to be three years from now, with an action plan that will help us to reach our stated goals and achieve our mission.

The strategic priorities identified in this plan are:

1. Improve quality of education through support for schools, teachers, parents and students across all grades
2. Foster economic empowerment by providing support for local entrepreneurs, technical skill training and job placement
3. Positively impact the environment through programming that educates, raises awareness, and promotes environmental best practices

In this plan, we remain committed to advancing our two main organizational goals of education and economic empowerment. However, we also recognize the significant threat that environmental degradation poses to educational and economic advances

in Santa Cruz. We commit to doubling down on our efforts to promote good environmental practices in our work and through our example, and to supporting the voices of community members on this important issue that impacts their community.

While not strategic priorities at this time, we remain committed to the core values that support the Amigos' mission. These include gender equality and women's empowerment, youth leadership, and the strength of our social enterprise businesses (store and café) to provide jobs for the local community. Additionally, our fundraising plan and the role of the Board of Directors are integral to our success in achieving these above objectives. Each has its own 4-year work plan to support the Strategic Plan.

Our Staff and Board are excited and energized by this plan. We hope you will continue to join us, to build a better future for Santa Cruz.

Sincerely,

Jessie Cohn
Executive Director

John Berry
Chair, on behalf of the entire
Amigos Board of Directors

Note: On January 28th, 2021, the Board of Directors of Amigos de Santa Cruz approved the extension of this Strategic Plan through 2023 due to the unprecedented events of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FOR OVER 20 YEARS, OUR PROGRAMS HAVE GROWN IN RESPONSE TO CHANGING LOCAL NEEDS, LED BY SANTA CRUZ COMMUNITY LEADERS THEMSELVES.

LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

Amigos is part of the powerful generational change underway in Santa Cruz. We are helping a generation attain an education for the first time.

FOCUS ON ONE COMMUNITY

By focusing on the seven rural communities of Santa Cruz, Amigos is able to understand and respond to the specific challenges facing the community.

EMPOWERMENT, NOT HANDOUTS

Amigos does not give handouts. We build the skills and confidence that people need to improve their own livelihoods and community over the long term.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Amigos de Santa Cruz is to improve the lives of the indigenous people of Santa Cruz la Laguna and surrounding villages through support for education and sustainable economic empowerment.

OUR VISION

We envision Santa Cruz communities where all families live in a healthy environment and have access to sustainable sources of income; where schools provide quality education to all children; and where women, men and youth have an active voice in decisions that impact their communities.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

WE BELIEVE THAT:

- Everyone should have the same opportunities available to them
- Everyone should have access to a good education
- Education is the key to alleviating poverty and empowering people
- Community members should take responsibility for improving their communities
- Youth need to play a critical role in social change

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

OUR STRENGTHS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Successful completion of our organization's first strategic plan (2015-2018) and first leadership transition from Founder to a new Executive Director
- Programs are well established in the local community, built on a high level of local buy-in, and focused on long-term impact
- Stronger internal systems of finance, administration and board involvement
- Training to promote indigenous leadership on our staff.
- Increasing value placed on education among the local population
- Our two social impact businesses are now financially self-sustainable, providing work opportunities and income

WHAT WE WANT TO DO BETTER

- Business skill training and pathways to entrepreneurship
- Overcome structural limitations to working with the public school system
- Increase emphasis on evaluation and impact analysis

IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES

- Harness the increasing value placed on education to advocate for better quality public education in Santa Cruz
- Expand opportunities for extracurricular activities for youth that reinforce educational outcomes
- Grow partnerships with outside institutions to increase opportunities for job skill training, job placements and small business growth
- Support the voice of community members to improve environmental practices
- Leverage the growing pool of educated and empowered women in Santa Cruz to improve gender equality and representation

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

- Serious environmental degradation poses a threat to educational and economic advancements in Santa Cruz
- Potential decrease in tourism on Lake Atitlan
- Ongoing issues of paternalism and negative misinformation in the local community

1 IMPROVE EDUCATION QUALITY



Public school participation is now 10 times what it was when Amigos started working in the Santa Cruz communities 20 years ago. Yet many students still graduate without learning essential reading, writing, math, or critical thinking skills.

Access to education alone is not sufficient. Santa Cruz children deserve access to a good education that prepares them to become successful professionals and leaders in their community.

THE AMIGOS PLAN

- Better Train Teachers
- Improve Education Policy
- Engage Parents

OUR IMPACT GOALS

- Train, reward and retain high-quality public school teachers
- Engage and equip parents with the skills to support their child's education in school and at home
- Work with education policy makers to improve school resources and prioritize student learning outcomes
- Support students' success in school with extra-curricular activities, more study resources, and sexual education to prevent early pregnancies and dropouts

2 CREATE NEW ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES



Santa Cruz is at a pivotal point in its history. Increased tourism on Lake Atitlan and a pioneering new wave of educated young people, particularly women, provide an opportunity for transforming the local economy.

Targeted job training and increased job creation are essential to ensure that these young people find meaningful work opportunities and do not resort to emigration.

THE AMIGOS PLAN

- Teach Technical Skills
- Increase Job Placements
- Support Local Entrepreneurs & New Businesses

OUR IMPACT GOALS

- Start a new environmental impact businesses that creates employment and makes Santa Cruz a regional environmental leader
- Train Santa Cruceños and Cruceñas in advanced technical skills like electro-domestic repair to find living-wage employment and start high-skilled local business (rather than relying on outside services)
- Better prepare vocational students and recent graduates to enter the labor market with job readiness skills and job-placement assistance
- Financial literacy classes for all CECAP Vocational Training Center graduates to encourage sound financial planning in the home

3 INCREASE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT



Santa Cruz's future, and the success of any educational and economic advances we make, is threatened by the environmental degradation of Lake Atitlán and its surrounding area.

We commit to doubling down on our efforts to promote good environmental practices in our work and through our example, and to supporting the voices of community members on this important issue that impacts their community.

THE AMIGOS PLAN

- Promote Environmental Education
- Start Enviro-Impact Business
- Champion Local Environmental Action

OUR GOALS

- Integrate environmental education in all Amigos programs
- Build CECAP's role as a local leader in environmental best practices
- Establish and promote new environmental impact businesses in Santa Cruz to demonstrate environmental action and create good local jobs
- Promote environmental action among other local institutions through advocacy, public awareness activities, and community projects

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS, BOARD MEMBERS, STAFF, PARTNERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS. TOGETHER WE ARE BUILDING A MORE PROSPEROUS SANTA CRUZ.



*Changing the world...
One community at a time,
One generation at a time.*

For more information about Amigos de Santa Cruz and to sign up for monthly e-newsletters, visit:
www.amigosdesantacruz.org

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