

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2029



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Kidz2Leaders Strategic Plan 2025–2029

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THE NEED FOR K2L & PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Having a parent incarcerated is listed as one of the top Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), according to a long-term study by Kaiser & the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). ACEs are defined as stressful, traumatic events including abuse, neglect, witnessing violence, and parental separation (incarceration). The prevalence of ACEs in a child's life is proven to increase the likelihood of both physical and mental health challenges throughout the course of their adult life.

Children of incarcerated parents are exposed to nearly five times as many ACEs as their counterparts without incarcerated parents. (*Natl Survey of Children's Health.*) Over time, the compilation of these traumatic experiences leads to toxic stress, negatively impacting brain development in youth, and eventually affecting the executive functions (decision making capability) of the brain.

Incarceration of a parent is a trauma of the same magnitude as abuse, domestic violence, and divorce (*Annie E. Casey Foundation*). The shame and stigma associated with incarceration causes these children to feel isolated and alone, exacerbating the effects of their experiences. (*Angel Tree Ministries*).

In 1999, Camp Hope was founded with the desire to serve the children and youth of incarcerated parents in Georgia. Twenty-five years later, this camp still serves as the start of a 10-year continuum of programming designed to serve children and youth through the challenges of living with an incarcerated parent. Our decade of programming includes:

- Annual overnight summer camp (ages 8 through 18)
- Two years of job training and leadership development (ages 15/16 to 18)
- Year-round family support and community-building activities

More than 99 percent of those who have completed K2L's 10-year continuum have remained free of incarceration.

PAST STRATEGIC PLAN HIGHLIGHTS: 2020-2024

From 2020 through the beginning of 2024, Kidz2Leaders board and staff created and pursued a strategic plan designed to grow well-established programs, increase participant retention, and strengthen the organization's infrastructure. Significant accomplishments from this planning cycle include:

- Every major K2L program doubling or tripling in number of individuals served from 2022-2024
 - Avg. annual individuals served from '18-'20: 300 → '23-'24: 750+
- Participant retention increasing from 75 percent (2022-2023) to 90 percent (2023-2024)
- Fundraising revenue increasing from \$700,000 (2021) to \$1.6 Million (2024)
- The K2L board and staff increasing in size and strength, from 9 to 15 (board) and 9 to 13 (staff)
- A long-term research partnership with the University of Notre Dame was established, centered around a randomized controlled trial measuring the effectiveness of the K2L program continuum.
- Program outcomes remained strong and consistent, with more than 99 percent of alumni living free from incarceration.

CURRENT APPROACH AND PLANNING PROCESS

As K2L approached the end of this planning cycle, discussion began about the formation of a new plan, with thoughtful consideration given to the strengths and opportunities facing the organization (outlined below). An experienced consultant, Janet Tharp of J&L Advising, was hired to design, lead and facilitate the renewed planning process. Ms. Tharp began the process by conducting surveys and interviews with all staff and board members in January and February of 2024. The K2L board, and staff leadership, met for a full-day workshop in March 2024 to review accomplishments and challenges of the past four years and to begin considering potential future plans. A strategic planning chairman and committee were named at that time, to include:

Mike Callahan, Planning Committee Chairman
Rick Stevens, K2L Board Chairman
Heather Rendle, Director
Shannon Drake, Director
Christina Cummings, K2L ED
Janet Tharp, Consultant & Facilitator

The committee was tasked with exploring the feasibility of two possible growth trajectories for K2L from 2025 to 2029. Their work from March to September included hosting a Community Vision Workshop, where six local nonprofit executives with significant experience in organizational growth and replication met for a half-day workshop to provide insight to K2L on best practices and growth models. Committee members also met with the leadership of a significant program partner to discuss and learn more about future partnership possibilities. The committee met regularly to discuss research updates and possible plans, and they ultimately presented a 5-year draft action plan to the K2L Board in September 2024. After further meeting and discussion, the K2L board subsequently voted to adopt this plan in October 2024.

2024 S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

<p>Strengths: Unique, highly effective program model 25+ year history of strong outcomes Necessity of mission, locally and nationally Professional Leadership (Board and staff) Financial stability: sufficient funding to meet annual expenses + reserve funding + strong annual audit</p>	<p>Weaknesses: Limited multi-year funding commitments Absence of “earned income” revenue model Board + staff recruitment + succession planning need improvement Technology + systems can be stronger Reserves could be stronger (endowment)</p>
<p>Opportunities: Program model is unique- possibility of entering new markets Need for K2L is considerable – no shortage of families who qualify for services These families need increased services An increase in funding and volunteer numbers is possible Program replication is possible</p>	<p>Threats: Unreliable revenue streams/economic conditions Unpredictable job market/potential for staff turnover Political/racial tension within communities Challenges in recruiting high volume of volunteers Potential hesitancy to align with K2L values</p>

THEORY OF CHANGE

This theory of change was created by the K2L board in 2020 and reviewed and updated in 2024.

Summary: The challenges faced by families of the incarcerated are significant, and their need for support is not decreasing. Ultimately, we believe that the longer children and families remain connected to the faith-centered community and opportunities offered by K2L, the more stability they will experience. This, in turn, lowers the likelihood of future incarceration for the children in these families.

Community Challenges: Families of the Incarcerated

- High rates of incarceration within communities (200,000 children of inmates in GA) and an imperfect judicial system
- The cyclical nature of familial incarceration
- Single parenting challenges due to other parent being incarcerated – financial stress
- The remaining parents/caregivers report feeling overwhelmed, isolated, and ashamed
- Lack of community support for children of incarcerated parents/Adverse community environments
- Long-term impact of Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on physical, emotional, and spiritual health
- Few positive role models + absence of Christian leaders within communities
- Lack of perceived hope

The Focus of K2L

- Create a community where long-term, healthy, Christ-centered relationships can be established and fostered, both peer-to-peer and between youth and safe adults, for 10+ years

- Provide faith-building opportunities, and educational opportunities, for children and families that evolve as children age and grow
- Help increase stability in the families through individualized physical, emotional, and spiritual support
- Reduce future incarceration likelihood in children of incarcerated parents

Strategy

The K2L program model is designed to accomplish the following over a period of 10+ years:

1. Create a healthy, Christ-centered community
2. Provide opportunities to develop leadership skills, life skills, and spiritual foundations
3. Increase stability within families

Operating Principles & Assumptions

- The Biblical calling to serve the poor, the widowed and the orphaned, and to remember those in prison, is the foundation of our organization.
- K2L's work will always be necessary.
- Youth will not go to prison if they actively engage in and finish the program.

Necessary Assets

- Highly professional, committed, and well-trained staff
- Funding and infrastructure for program operations
- Camping facilities for retreats and summer camp, and available sites for other programming
- More than 750 + volunteers who have availability and desire to give of their time annually
- Alumni to remain engaged as leaders after formal program is complete

Desired Program Results

Camp Hope: Campers will build trusting relationships, learn basic Christian principles, and establish long-term Christian community, as well as begin to develop basic leadership skills.

Interns4Tomorrow: Interns will have the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to make well informed choices regarding their education and career, and to pursue their goals after high school.

Family Support: Families will achieve greater stability (physical, emotional, spiritual) through K2L's individualized support and educational, community-building activities.

Alumni: Graduates of the Kidz2Leaders continuum will avoid incarceration, develop a mature faith in God, and become leaders in their families and communities.

Mission Statement

Kidz2Leaders exists to break the cycle of generational incarceration.

Impact Statement

Kidz2Leaders serves children of incarcerated parents from their youth into adulthood in order that they may live productive, Christ-centered lives, free of incarceration.

Vision Statement

Young adults who complete our programs can lead productive lives, avoid incarceration, and contribute back to their communities through leadership and volunteerism.

Core Values

Kidz2Leaders is committed to:

- Biblical Principles
- Organizational Growth
- Integrity of board and staff
- Unity in Christ
- Collaboration with like-minded organizations
- Accountability to our donors and friends
- Professionalism and safety of programs
- Humility as we serve children and families

Strategic Growth Priorities: 2025-2029

After 25 years of serving families of the incarcerated in the metro-Atlanta community, Kidz2Leaders has established itself as a safe, professional resource, demonstrated expertise in providing long-term, effective programming to at-risk youth, and created an evidence-based service-delivery model that has yet to be replicated in other markets.

After careful consideration of organizational capabilities, K2L leadership plans to pursue two simultaneous growth pathways:

1. Maximize our service capacity in the Atlanta market, bringing as many families of the incarcerated into the Kidz2Leaders pipeline as possible, while maintaining a high-quality product.

Focus area: Maintaining the strength and integrity of our core operation in Atlanta, while continuing to grow the number of families served here, is our top priority. Over the past three years, K2L has increased the average annual number of new participants entering our program pipeline from 30 to nearly 100, and K2L has increased annual retention of existing participants to 90 percent. We desire to continue to bring in an average of 100 new participants a year and maintain an average of 90 percent retention. Program professionalism and safety are critical to our success, and staff and board will maintain their focus on the quality of program infrastructure and reliability of systems.

Limiting Factors: Camp Hope, a week-long overnight camp, has served as the entry-point into the K2L continuum for children ages 8-11 since the program's inception. Having camp as an entry-point is key to the success of the model, as it allows children to form community, establish trust, and begin to learn more about God. Rental availability of quality camp facilities during summer months is a challenging limiting factor in K2L's growth plans. The K2L Board has made the decision not to pursue ownership of camping facilities, as we believe camp facility maintenance is costly and far beyond our current areas of expertise. As a result, K2L's local growth is limited by the space at camps available to us each summer. Based on our knowledge and resources at this time, we believe four sessions of camp are the most we can effectively operate without owning camp facilities. Our local growth trajectory is based on this assumption and may change in coming years as resources evolve.

2. Plan for and pursue regional growth, replicating our program model in nearby geographic areas where there is a demonstrated need and lack of resources.

Focus areas: Due to the limitations on our Atlanta-based growth, as described above, leadership has explored other possibilities for reaching additional children and families. K2L works with three significant national partners who have confirmed the uniqueness of our program model, and the absence of programming around the country specifically designed to meet the needs of children of the incarcerated. One of these partners – Prison Fellowship/Angel Tree – is the largest Christian organization in the country serving incarcerated men and women. Prison Fellowship maintains data on the number of families of the incarcerated by county in each state, and they have identified four markets in the Southeast in which K2L services would be most needed: Memphis, TN; Birmingham, AL; Spartanburg/Greenville, SC; and Jacksonville, FL.

Due to proximity, the K2L Board has decided to further explore the possibility of replicating our program model in either Birmingham or Spartanburg, and to pursue the establishment of a pilot operation in one of these cities within five years. In order to ensure the fidelity of the program model and adherence to K2L values, we plan for this pilot operation to be wholly owned by Kidz2Leaders, rather than establishing a franchise, or a new chapter/affiliate. The pilot city will be selected based on confirmation of the need for services, as well as potential for new funding partners and community partners.