



Community engagement is a pillar of Jabian Consulting and we routinely work with local organizations to provide leadership, volunteerism, and financial support. One of those organizations is Girls Inc. of Tarrant County, with whom we recently went through a robust strategic planning process with the board and leadership. Below is an excerpt of an interview we conducted with Girls Inc. of Tarrant County CEO Jennifer Limas, and board chair MaryAnn Means-Dufrene, talking about the experience.

## Tell us a little bit about Girls Inc. of Tarrant County and your role.

**Jennifer:** Girls Inc. programs help girls navigate gender, economic, and social barriers. Our mission is to inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. I became CEO of Girls Inc. of Tarrant County in 2012 and have worked to expand our number of girls served and the programs we provide to help address the many challenges girls face today. We currently serve more than 20,000 girls with more than one million hours of programming.

**MaryAnn:** I currently serve as the board chair and work closely with Jennifer and her team. I'm inspired by what the organization looks to achieve, and that's what drew me to it initially. Through my work as a

human potentialist, I enjoy both learning from and providing growth opportunities for the girls we serve.

## What sparked the interest in formalizing your strategic plan?

**Jennifer:** We have experienced a tremendous amount of growth and believe there is much more still to come. With that growth comes the need to organize and get united around a common direction, purpose, and plan to achieve the desired outcomes.

## What did that process reveal?

**MaryAnn:** I think going through the rigorous and structured process in and of itself brought about changes. It created order, gave people time and space to think

more deeply about their work and the impact of their work, and started conversations that change people's perspectives and change their relationships with each other. For the board, it created a lot of energy, and for the staff it created clarity around what our near-term and long-term steps are.

**Jennifer:** And then the opportunities that we have to see the depth of the organization develop both internally and then in what it's able to deliver to the community has yet to be seen. But the strategic plan itself provides the roadmap for how we go about that work.

## What did you learn through the process?

**Jennifer:** There is a certain complexity to doing strategic planning correctly. It's more than just thinking about or

documenting where you want to be in a few years. When done well, it really is a complex initiative that takes so many things into perspective. Also, often what is forgotten during planning or any other major organizational shift is the human impact and evaluating the humanity side of things, which is both very delicate and very complex.

**MaryAnn:** When things are humming along or it doesn't seem like there's anything terribly wrong, people will forget how much more can be accomplished. People forget the possibilities, so this is a great reminder that we can always go farther and keep improving.