



HUMAN SYSTEMS
DYNAMICS INSTITUTE

50 E. Golden Lake Road
Circle Pines, MN 55014
hsdinstitute.org
866.HSD.INST

Charting the Future of YuKonstruct

Strategic Framework 2019-2022

Since its beginning in 2014, YuKonstruct has grown and thrived because it leveraged the energy and innovation of members to meet real needs in the Yukon community. As you look to the future, there is an opportunity to leverage growth by seeing, understanding, and influencing the current patterns. The purpose of the current strategic planning process was to inform the strategic decisions that will create that future. This document outlines the assumptions, process, and products of the communities' work. It will continue to change in the future as it adapts to emerging opportunities and challenges.

Assumptions

YuKonstruct is a unique organization. It is supported by a Staff and Board of Directors, but they represent a small part of what the YuKonstruct Society stands for and what it does. Staff and Board work in support of a diverse community of energetic and creative makers and doers. Rather than pushing an agenda of their own, these central players create a space and establish conditions that "ignite" whatever sparks of innovation and artistic insight members bring into the space. The nature of the system challenges assumptions of traditional strategy and operational planning. Through engaging with members of the community, we discovered that the most effective plan for YuKonstruct's future would:

Avoid specific, detailed action items and task lists. We make this assumption for two reasons. First, a wide variety of people engage with and support the work of YuKonstruct. Some of them have formal titles and roles, others bring their volunteer energies, and still others contribute as members from time-to-time. An effective strategy will engage all of these stakeholder groups, while allowing each one to define his or her own contribution and pathway of action. Staff members and Board members will have unique tasks and accountabilities informed by the Strategic Framework, but those will become part of their operational planning. Their action items will adapt as things change, so they continue to support a strategy that belongs to all.

Second, the YuKonstruct community is a complex, adaptive system. It exists in an unpredictable environment, so its success depends on an ability to adapt quickly and freely. A "locked-in" set of activities could reduce the agility needed to leverage opportunities as they arise. On the other hand, structure is also necessary to ensure efficiency and accountability. That structure for planning and decision making is provided by a Strategic Framework, which includes clear vision and mission, shared

Nothing is intractable.

commitments, strategic priorities, and markers of success. In support of the strategy, locally determined action items, procedures, written agreements, and practices create the operational structure that implements the Strategic Framework.

Plan to plan again. YuKonstruct needs the adaptive capacity to respond to emerging opportunities and to surface and resolve issues quickly when they arise. The environment will change unexpectedly, so plans must evolve quickly as well. This planning process assumes that strategy is not a once-and-done affair. Rather, the work of the Society should be reviewed in light of the Strategic Framework at least twice each year. Such an iterative review will afford adaptation either for the work, if it has wandered from the strategy; or adaptation of the strategy, if it is no longer relevant.

Live and work with tension. Some things will never be resolved—and they shouldn't be. YuKonstruct is vibrant because it holds a variety of creative tensions. As data were collected and analyzed throughout the project, an array of strategic differences emerged. Both ends of the tensions are important for the work of YuKonstruct. Some people and projects align with one—others are at the opposite extreme. Such tensions will not be resolved, but they will frame trade-offs and inform and energize ongoing conversations. These tensions have driven decisions in the past and will continue to shape the future of the YuKonstruct Society. They include:

- Whitehorse vs Greater Yukon
- Individual vs Institution
- Accessible facility vs Secure facility
- Start up vs Sustain
- Business & Industry vs Arts & Crafts
- Volunteers vs Staff
- Planned vs Emergent
- Short-term investments vs Long-term investments
- Entrepreneur vs Artisan
- History vs Future
- Members vs Community
- Discipline vs Freedom
- Consistency vs Innovation

If any of these tensions is resolved to either one side or the other, YuKonstruct Society will lose its identity as well as its purpose and energy. Given that the organization must live with these difficult dichotomies, strategy and operations must be tuned to deal with trade-offs and tough choices.

These assumptions, and the components of the Strategic Framework, have emerged from a structured process of inquiry and dialogue. The next section will describe that process.

Process

The planning process included four phases.

Phase 1: Interviews. Twelve members of the YuKonstruct Society were interviewed by phone. Each interview was between 30 minutes and 1 hour long. Each person was asked to reflect and respond to questions that were reviewed and approved by a Board subcommittee. They included:

- ▶ Who are you? What is your background, role, and experience with YuKonstruct?
- ▶ What is working and what is not working?
- ▶ What do you think holds the YuKonstruct Society together?
- ▶ In your opinion what seems certain and what is uncertain about the future of the YuKonstruct Society?
- ▶ What are you most excited about? What are you most worried about?
- ▶ What do you think needs to happen for YuKonstruct to be successful?
- ▶ What are you willing to do to make YuKonstruct a success?
- ▶ Is there anything else you want us to know?

Themes and questions from these interviews were summarized and shared with members of the subcommittee. A copy of that interim report is available from YuKonstruct Executive Director, Lana Selbee (lana@yukonstruct.com). Findings from the interviews were used to design a series of planning dialogues.

Phase 2: Dialogues. On March 2-4, Jennifer Jones-Patulli met with groups of stakeholders at the YuKonstruct NorthLight Innovation Hub. On Saturday morning, March 2, members of the community were invited to answer questions in person or to share their comments on sheets posted around the space.

Those comments, along with the interview findings, formed the foundation for a dialogue among Staff, Board, and members who chose to be engaged on the afternoon of March 2. That group considered a variety of questions, including:

- ▶ How did we get to where we are today?
- ▶ What are the identity and vision we hold? Is it serving our purposes?
- ▶ What is the ideal state for YuKonstruct over the next five years?
- ▶ How do we behave, make decisions, and measure performance to get there?
- ▶ What are the most important priority activities for the Board and Staff for the future?

Results of these conversations were carried into a conversation of the Board and Key Influencers on Sunday, March 3. In their dialogues, they worked together to:

- ▶ Refine a statement of vision, mission, and Simple Rules¹
- ▶ Consider goals and priorities over a three-year period
- ▶ Explore the roles of Staff and Board and clarifications that would improve work in the future.

Finally, on Monday morning, March 4, Jones-Patulli met with the Staff of YuKonstruct, and their new ED to confirm role clarifications and to begin structuring their operational plans for tasks and resources.

Results from these dialogues were consolidated into a foundational document, Strategic Framework, that will inform operational planning and strategic decision making and action into the future.

Phase 3: Draft Strategic Framework. The results of the dialogues provided the raw materials for the Strategic Framework. Following the dialogues, Jones-Patulli and the rest of the team at HSD Institute drafted a document that included the core identity and strategic structure for the future of YuKonstruct Society. The Framework included original drafts of:

- ▶ Vision statement
- ▶ Mission statement
- ▶ Shared commitments
- ▶ Creative tensions
- ▶ Strategic priorities

That draft document was provided to Staff and Board for their review and response as they prepared to share it with the community.

Phase 4: Community Response. The components of the Strategic Framework were shared with YuKonstruct members and the wider community in a variety of engagements. People were asked to provide their questions, comments, and suggestions. Those comments were incorporated into the subsequent revisions of the document. The review/revision process will continue because the Strategic Framework is intended to be a living document that evolves to meet the emerging needs of the community.

¹ In response to later feedback, the list of Simple Rules is now referred to as the Shared Commitments of the YuKonstruct community.

Products

The final deliverable of the project has two parts. The first is the Strategic Framework itself. The second is a list of recommendations we would make to support its ongoing implementation and the continuing strategic and operational development of the YuKonstruct Society.

Strategic Framework

The components of the Strategic Framework will be used to inform action and also to communicate YuKonstruct's purposes and plans to members of the wider community. It will be formatted and graphically designed for a variety of uses. For the purposes of this report, the Framework is presented in the form of a table. The table summarizes the findings from Phases 1 and 2 of the project. It also shows how those findings relate to each of the Shared Commitments; how each of the Commitments relates to a Strategic Priority; and how progress on the priorities will be assessed over time. Tables on the following pages summarize the Strategic Framework.

YuKonstruct Strategic Framework

The YuKonstruct Community spoke:		And we listened: YuKonstruct Strategic Framework	
YuKonstruct today:	Hopes for Future:	Mission & Vision	
Stated vision	Put in place a better vision	YuKonstruct is a valued community that helps Yukoners bring their ideas and passions to life	
Stated mission	Establish clarity of who are More clear guidance about what to say "yes" to and what to say "no" to	YuKonstruct ignites doers and dreamers through shared space, knowledge and resources	
YuKonstruct today:	Hopes for Future:	Shared Commitments	Strategic Priorities
Community engagement Meaningful programming	Whitehorse community versus wider Yukon community Reach out beyond Whitehorse Maintain and grow a strong sense of community	Contribute to the social and economic health of Yukon	Benefit the Yukon <i>How will we know?</i> Outreach to Yukon communities Telling our story nationally (Brand awareness) Public awareness and understanding of YuKonstruct's brand and what we do Being a space for the broader community to develop ideas and gather
Invite and support	Disregard of common courtesies and informal rules Stratification of members Culture of white middle class versus indigenous/native participation Better clarity and accountability around conduct and expectations for all in the Society Ensure safe use of the facilities Ensure accessibility to all communities	Foster a welcoming, inclusive, diverse, and respectful environment	

Nothing is intractable.

YuKonstruct Strategic Framework (continued 2 of 3)

The YuKonstruct Community spoke:		And we listened: YuKonstruct Strategic Framework	
YuKonstruct today:	Hopes for Future:	Shared Commitments	Strategic Priorities
People and passion hold YuKonstruct together formal (organized gatherings, programs, and Society events) and informal (impromptu conversations, collaborations, connections)	Business versus hobby Ensure members' needs are met Access to spaces at NorthLight Growth in programming for the Makerspace to meet needs of different communities Finding solutions to everyday concerns around member conduct and building improvements Explore alternative sources of funding	Support members ideas and initiatives	Grow Members value and benefits <i>How will we know?</i> Increased programming from Makerspace and Launchspace Celebrating our members' successes Membership at a consistent, sustainable level Telling the success story of our organization National connections and partnerships Increased local programming partnerships
Continue to grow Stories, blogs, videos, all available media	Better share members' stories and achievements Develop measurements and accountabilities More communications and more media	Celebrate successes and failures	
Exciting, diverse, and adapting programming	Invest sufficient time and energy to build and sustain the relationships Support continuous engagement	Embrace the unique and innovative in the spirit of fun and community	

Nothing is intractable.

YuKonstruct Strategic Framework (continued 3 of 3)

The YuKonstruct Community spoke:		And we listened: YuKonstruct Strategic Framework	
YuKonstruct today:	Hopes for Future:	Shared Commitments	Strategic Priorities
Many current and emerging partnerships	Increased clarity between roles of staff and Board Structures for regular meetings between Board and key Staff Leverage partnerships Communicate with staff, volunteer, and community voices	Seek and encourage collaboration and partnerships	Stabilize and sustain the organization <i>How will we know?</i> A healthy mixture of grants, sponsorship and earned revenue that positions the organization to be less dependent on grants. Clear, updated Governance Policies Clear organisational structure Clarity around the roles of the Board, Staff and Members
Manage resources of many kinds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial • Human • Structural • Relational 	Fairness of use and contributions Leverage the new space (NorthLight Innovation) Put in place better systems procedures Better management and operational discipline Better use of staff to mitigate patterns of overwork More effective procedures, systems, schedules for activities Policies and procedures regarding staffing and succession planning Support for Board and ED to focus on strategy and delegate operational issues to Staff Explore creative source of more and different spaces Build financial stability Improve talent management for staff	Manage resources responsibly and transparently	

Nothing is intractable.

Recommendations

It has been a pleasure and an honor to work with the Board, Staff, and community of YuKonstruct throughout this project. We believe you have made great progress in developing a more strategic and integrated approach to your important work. This will set a foundation for you to expand and deepen the services you provide and opportunities you inspire across the Yukon.

We also know that strategy does not go far without operational implementation. To help you along the path toward implementation, we respectfully offer the following recommendations.

- ▶ As you grow, some practices will need to be replaced and formalized with procedures. We suggest that you track issues that arise over the course of a month and identify the functions that are generating those issues. Begin by documenting and standardizing those processes as simply as you can and implementing them quickly. After they are in place, you can find the next most troublesome issue to focus on. Over time, you will build an efficient and effective set of procedures.
- ▶ Decision making is always an issue, and it will continue to be a challenge going forward. We suggest that when a controversial issue arises that you use the Strategic Framework and the list of creative tensions to ask: 1) WHAT? Define the problem clearly and from multiple perspectives; 2) SO WHAT? Consider what solution would best reflect the Strategic Framework and balance the tensions and document your decision; 3) NOW WHAT? Do it; 4) NEXT WHAT? Test the outcome and adjust, if necessary. This process will help you move forward in decision making and learn as you go.
- ▶ Evaluation, measurement, and accountability are key to your future success. We suggest that you choose one key measure for each of your strategic priorities and track that measurement often and over time. Use that measure to frame questions about what is happening and what might be improved to move the strategy forward.
- ▶ In these times of rapid growth, roles and responsibilities will sometimes be confusing and ambiguous. It is relatively impossible to get a rock-solid role description that will work over time in a complex environment like yours. Rather than making a large investment in documenting job descriptions, you can begin with simple, broad statements of accountabilities. Then you can be prepared to surface, talk about, resolve, and document issues as they arise. The documentation is important, so you don't end up making the same decisions again and again.
- ▶ In this next phase of development, both the Board and the Staff are going to need to change how they do their business. Board will become more strategic and focused on policy, while Staff is clearer and more consistent with operations and practice. During this time, it will be very important to keep communications open between Board and Staff. We believe that you have begun, and should continue, regular communications between the leadership of the Board and Staff to resolve escalated issues and ensure shared understanding and action.

- ▶ Leadership in such an emergent, complex adaptive system is always a challenge. The uncertainty and ambiguity and volume of work can burn leaders out. We recommend that you plan leadership development support—training and coaching—for leadership of the Staff and Board during this critical time.
- ▶ The Shared Commitments in the Strategic Framework can be powerful levers for individual, institutional, and community change. We recommend that you host conversations about them and what they mean for individuals and groups across the system.

Conclusion

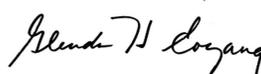
Thank you for this opportunity to support your work. Though your history is short, it is certainly remarkable. We hope that this planning process and the Strategic Framework will set conditions for an equally remarkable and productive future.

This version of the report and the associated sample graphics are in draft state at this time. We look forward to your feedback and questions and to generating a final copy that will be useful to all YuKonstruct stakeholders.

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer Jones-Patulli
Consulting Associate



Glenda Eoyang
Executive Director



Catherine M. Perme
Consulting Associate