



the northeast  
**independent  
living**  
program, inc.

## **NILP Strategic Plan**

**2012-2017**

# NILP STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2017

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# **NILP Strategic Plan Introduction**

## **NILP HISTORY**

NILP has a long and productive history of serving people with disabilities in the Merrimac Valley and its greater service area. Founded in 1980, by a small group of advocates: Ellen Gilbert, Susan Halloran, Charles Carr and Bill Martin; the Center opened its doors to people with disabilities in November. Through the leadership of its co –founding Directors, Susan Halloran and Charles Carr, the Center became recognized nationally as a place of innovation and cross disability service. Here are some highlights of NILP’s history and leadership in the Independent Living Movement:

- In 1980, NILP was one of the first IL Centers to be funded by the newly created federal funding for Centers for Independent Living.
- Charlie Carr’s Executive Leadership for 27 years resulted in a nationally recognized cross disability, ILC peer run model.
- In the early days IL Centers were all types of programs including funding programs in Hospitals and housing.
- NILP believed that Centers should be a resource and Advocacy Program and that Advocacy is the cornerstone of the IL movement
- NILP was also one of the best examples of real consumer control in the Country. From the beginning a majority of the Board and Staff were people with disabilities
- In the early 90’s NILP was the first IL Center in the Commonwealth to receive funds from DMH to provide IL Services to Psychiatric Survivors
- NILP was a leader in developing the National Council for Independent Living—The National organization for IL Centers and State IL Councils
- Today NILP is nationally recognized as a leader in independent living and in developing new and better ways to assist people with disabilities to live and work in communities of their choice.

In 2007, Charlie Carr left NILP to accept a new position as the Commissioner of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. After a year-long executive search committee process and much deliberation, a unanimous vote of the Board led to the hire of June Cowen as its new Executive Director in April 2008.

Since 2008, the Board of Directors and June Cowen have worked tirelessly to engage the community and unite consumers to navigate through difficult transitions from its founding, grass roots base to its ever expanding and changing consumer needs.

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Today, June has guided the Center through its transitional phase and has significantly expanded the services NILP provides through its collaboration with the ADRC (Aging and Disability Resource Consortium) and through expanding its PCA program while dealing with one of the most challenging fiscal periods in the Center's history.

In addition, June with collaboration with the Board assisted with planning and development of this Strategic Plan. Through the leadership of President Jami Cope, the Executive Committee and June, the latest plan has taken shape and demonstrates an ambitious 5 year strategy to address the needs of people with disabilities of the greater Merrimac Valley.

### **PLAN STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Center has had a number of Strategic Plans the most recent of which covered the period 2002-2007. In 2009 the board began the process of trying to accomplish a new strategic plan itself. Much work was done but it decided that a consultant was needed to complete the task. In March of this year it decided to choose a consultant and after a meeting of the Executive Committee in April, John Chappell, former Deputy Commissioner of MRC for over 28 years, submitted a proposal to NILP and was selected as the consultant. The proposed timeframe of accomplishing the plan was also accepted. The proposal outcome was the presentation of a new 5 year Strategic Plan to be presented at the Center's annual meeting in October.

The accepted strategy included the following:

- an executive committee meeting to accept a final strategy;
- conducting a number of focus groups with a wide variety of center constituencies including consumers, staff, business and community leaders, and Board Members;
- compiling of the focus group results by the consultant into a draft plan
- holding a Board Retreat in August to review the draft plan and provide its input into the development of the final plan;
- presentation of the final for acceptance by September

### **FOCUS GROUP RESULTS**

After the Board approved the strategy for the development of the Plan the first stage, the scheduling and holding of the focus groups began. The focus groups all used the same questions which were:

- 1. What do you know about NILP and what it does for the community?**
- 2. In thinking about NILP programs and services, what do we do best? Be Specific.**
- 3. What are some unmet needs for our consumers in the community?**
- 4. What are current trends in the field of Independent Living that NILP may be able to address now or in the future?**
- 5. What programs/services would you like NILP to provide, improve upon or discontinue?**

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In April the first two focus group sessions were held with the staff. There were some common themes that emerged in the first two sessions which included:

- Peer Support is key to Center Success
- Housing and transportation are still issues that impede Independent Living significantly
- Better communication between Center programs
- Remove “silo” effect of Center staffing and design
- Center needs to have more capacity to serve un-served/underserved constituencies

The staff identified many areas that needed to be addressed but it also felt that the NILP was a great place to work and changed the lives of people with disabilities. They unanimously agreed that Advocacy and Peer Support were the keys to the Center’s success and that the work being done for the service area was important.

The Business and Community Providers focus group was held in June and again in July. Both groups identified two key issues that faced NILP. They are:

- NILP needs more visibility in the community---it is not known by some of the constituencies it wants to serve
- NILP needs better collaboration with the various providers in its service area

It was pointed out by both groups that for those who knew of NILP and the work it does that it an invaluable resource. For example the collaboration being done with Merrimac Elder Services to create the ADRC (Aging and Disability Resource Consortium) was invaluable for both the elderly and disability communities. This type of collaboration needed to be replicated if possible with other providers to increase both the visibility and reach of NILP into its community.

The Love Group Focus session was held in June. The Love Group is a Peer Support Group for persons with disabilities in Recovery. The Love Group also works closely with the RLC (The Recovery Learning Center) at NILP. The RLC, funded the Massachusetts .Department of Mental Health. The Love Group identified some interesting issues needed further addressing including:

- Skills Training Workshops that focused on specific issues such as money management, better health management, alternative medicine, using computers
- More access to Peer Counseling or Peer Support
- More Support Groups for different issues

The Love Group was also very complementary about NILP and its services and felt that the Center was doing a good job of serving people in recovery. The group praised NILP and its approach of using peer support and advocacy to advance independent living for all people with disabilities. They universally expressed satisfaction with the staff but saw the need for more resources to assist more people with disabilities to live in the community.

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The next Focus Group was conducted with the Teen Fest participants. The Teen Fest has become one of the most successful activities for young people who are active consumers with NILP. The summer activities include everything from computer usage to creating and presenting a theatrical event by and for the Teen Fest members. This focus group produced some very revealing results. The group was very active and had much to say about NILP. Here are some of their comments:

- The Center helps everyone work together and help each other
- Makes you feel more independent each day
- Anyone can enter NILP and feel comfortable
- Working with teens so they can pay it forward

Overall the comments about NILP were very positive and insightful. They also had suggestions to improve the Center including helping teens to become employment ready to expanding Teen Fest so that many more young people could benefit from the opportunity and peer relationships that are created by the Program.

A final, more diverse Consumer Focus Group was held in early August. This group included individuals with physical disabilities and those who are Deaf. This group had a wide variety of comments about the way Center services helped and also commented on some needed improvements. Their comments included:

- NILP helps Deaf people get the needed services they need to live more independently'
- The Center helps you when you call, if they know of a resource that you need they help you get it
- The PCA(Personal Care Assistance)Program is a wonderful resource---it helps me live in the community independently
- There is sometimes a failure to communicate the resources and services that are available
- A support group for parents with disabilities or other ways to provide support is needed
- A Knowledge packet that can be given to new consumers that will give them a brief overview of the resources that are available by NILP and also information that is specific to their community is needed(it was mentioned that there is the Green Book of community resources but the consumer stated that it was not provided to them)
- Better coordination of access to all services NILP provides by all of the different Programs/departments.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Board met on August 20, 2011 to review the draft plan developed by the consultant. The day long Board Retreat generated significant input to the draft plan and some significant changes and additions were produced. The Board decided that the consultant would take the work produced by the Board Retreat and complete a final draft that would be submitted to the Board by email at least two weeks prior to their meeting on September 22, 2011. This final review would give those who had been unable to attend the Retreat an opportunity to provide input. The NILP Board of Directors reviewed the Strategic Plan 2012- 2017 at the September 22, 2011 Board Meeting with unanimous vote of acceptance, support and renewed energy.

A special thank you is noted to our Strategic Planning Consultant, John Chappell, for his dedication, focus, patience and attention to ensuring an all inclusive process. The process for developing the Strategic Plan has included input from 7 focus groups with more than 120 different individuals from all NILP constituencies. It also included many meetings with the Executive Committee and the full Board.

It is also important, at this time, to recognize the leadership and accomplishments of the Executive Committee: Jami Cope, President, Jim Fraas, Vice Chair, Jim Kelly, Treasurer, and Gary Hale, Clerk, who empowered and guided the process to a successful outcome. Their input has been invaluable and their commitment for the development of the Strategic Plan made it become a reality.

All of the NILP Community has come together to make a significant difference in the lives of persons living with disabilities. We look forward to a united and bright future.

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### NILP STRATEGIC PLAN DOCUMENT 2012-2017

#### MISSION STATEMENT

Northeast Independent Living Program, Inc. is a consumer controlled Independent Living Center providing advocacy and services to people with all disabilities in the greater Merrimack Valley who wish to live as independently as possible in the community.

#### VISION STATEMENT

At NILP, we believe that people with disabilities are valued individuals with the same rights and responsibilities as society as a whole. This value is reflected in many ways: a community that is accessible to all; recognition that the experience of a disability is a natural part of life; and the belief that differing abilities are not a determining factor for any individual's participation in education, employment, recreation, transportation, housing, or other aspects of community life.

NILP is governed by people with disabilities who recognize the need for systems of support in every person's movement toward independence. For some, supports are readily available through family, friends, and community. For others, assistance may be necessary to assure full inclusion in community life. NILP was established to assist people with disabilities, and their families, in creating the supports they need to achieve their greatest personal potential and independence.

#### DEFINITIONS OF PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals should always be: **S** – Specific    **M** – Measurable    **A** – Achievable    **R** – Realistic    **T** – Time Bound

1. **Goal.** Briefly describe each goal remembering that goals are broad statements of intent, direction & purpose.
2. **Objective.** How will the Goal be accomplished? (Use quantitative measures such as % or dollar increase in revenue or market share and/or use qualitative measures which are descriptive of criteria.)
3. **Importance.** Rank the goal as Essential, Important, or Desirable as follows:  
*Essential* – required for job performance  
*Important* – helpful for job performance  
*Desirable* – asset for job performance



## 1<sup>ST</sup> GOAL AREA—ENHANCE AND MAINTAIN A VIABLE FUNDRAISING STRATEGY

### Goal 1A:

Enhance NILP's development strategies with new and innovative initiatives.

### Objective 1A(1):

Develop at least two new fundraising strategies for fy13.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Objective 1A(2):

To evaluate and develop staff(s) role in fund development by March 2012.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Objective 1A(3):

Have the Executive Director or a member of the senior leadership team attend or submit reports regarding fundraising activities to all meetings of the Board's fundraising committee.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Objective 1A(4) :

Intensify outreach to the cities and towns of the service area for ADA compliance activities by doing at least one consultation every two months for the next two years.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Objective 1A(5):

Research the possibility by March 2012 of engaging a fundraising consultant to work in collaboration with existing Development Director to develop grants that will contribute to the development of an outreach and marketing strategy as well as other targeted grants.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

## 2<sup>ND</sup> GOAL AREA-DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN QUALIFIED STAFF

### Goal 2A:

Ensure a Diverse, well-qualified staff committed to continuous learning, improved job performance, and the NILP Mission

### Objective 2A(1):

Support and retain staff, especially during periods of diminishing economic stability by identifying at least 3 local, no cost training opportunities each fiscal year.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Goal 2B:

Identify and implement training programs that increase staff competency to better serve consumers.

### Objective 2B(1):

Survey and offer relevant and timely professional development and training programs based on the results of the staff training needs assessment. Staff attendance at training programs will be at 90% participation by July 2012.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Objective 2B(2):

Expand staff skill sets to create new skills training opportunities for consumers by 2014

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Objective 2B(3):

Initiate skills training workshops based on focus group results by 2015.

### Goal 2C:

Review existing interdepartmental communications methods and develop improved strategies for staff interaction.

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### Objective 2C(1):

Develop interdepartmental line staff team with one member from each program to develop and implement strategies to improve interdepartmental communications and cross disability services. Initial strategies should be submitted to the Management Team by June 2013.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Goal 2D:

The management team with input from program staff shall review present service delivery structure for possible refinement and changes to minimize the "silo" effect of the present department design.

### Objective 2D(1):

Complete a review of structure with recommendations to the Senior Management Team for possible implementation by September 2013.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

## 3<sup>RD</sup> GOAL AREA - MAINTAIN WELL QUALIFIED AND DIVERSIFIED BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Goal 3A:

Develop a well-structured Board of Directors that is reflective of the community NILP serves.

### Objective 3A(1):

Review overall board structure and its disability and constituency representation and develop a plan for identifying appropriate additional members by September 2012

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Objective 3A(2):

Board shall conduct outreach and recruitment to the mayors and town commissions on persons with disabilities in the center's service area for expansion of political presence on board by contacting at least 10 commissions for possible board membership by January 2013.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

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### Goal 3B:

Initiate strategy for ongoing board training regarding board functions, relationship between board and staff and strategies for encouraging “upward mobility” for officers and board members

#### Objective 3B(1):

Through the Board development committee conduct a survey of the present board for their input on board trainings by March 2012

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

#### Objective 3B(2):

The Board Development Committee with any assistance it deems necessary develop a training outline based on feedback from survey by July 2012 and to be updated yearly.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

#### Objective 3B(3):

Conduct board training on roles and responsibilities by September 2012 and annually thereafter.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

## 4<sup>TH</sup> GOAL AREA—DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A MARKETING AND OUTREACH STRATEGY

### Goal 4A:

Enhance NILP’s visibility in its service area

#### Objective 4A(1):

Initiate a review of the present web page and implement recommendations for improvement by January 2013.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

#### Objective 4A(2):

Review other means of enhancing visibility in the community such as using Facebook, an electronic newsletter for community constituencies and consumers with a set of final recommendations completed by June 2012.

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**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### **Objective 4A(3):**

Develop and implement an electronic communications strategy based on the review above by 2012 with updates to carry the Center through 2016.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### **Goal 4B:**

Use the ADA capacity of NILP as a strategy for identifying visibility in the community.

### **Objective 4B(1):**

Develop a strategy for marketing NILP's ADA capacity through the use of electronic email blasts, etc for enhancing its ADA consultation by January 2013

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### **Objective 4B(2) :**

Implement ADA Consultation Strategy by June 2014

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### **Goal 4C:**

Use community providers as part of expanding NILP's visibility in the community through collaboration and networking.

### **Objective 4C(1):**

Develop and implement an active outreach campaign to community providers throughout the Center's service area with an emphasis on underserved areas to commence by April 2012.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

## **5<sup>TH</sup> GOAL AREA—EXPAND PHYSICAL PRESENCE IN OUR SERVICE AREA**

### **Goal 5A:**

Explore facility needs in Lowell and Haverhill: The focus should not just be on facility

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development, but on community presence and community-based service.

### **Objective 5A(1):**

Expand service provision to the Lowell and Haverhill areas by at least 20% by January 2014.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### **Goal 5B:**

Expand NILP's presence in its service area by exploring the use of Disability Commissions as partners.

### **Objective 5B(1):**

Develop and implement a presentation and outreach strategy to at least 10 of the Disability Commissions in the service area with an emphasis on partnership and support for NILP's presence in their community by January 2013. This objective could be complimented by the board outreach objective in the Board goal area.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

## 6<sup>TH</sup> GOAL AREA—DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT AN ENHANCED ADVOCACY STRATEGY

### **Goal 6A:**

Implement a strategy that will increase NILP's ability to advocate for individuals with disabilities.

### **Objective 6A(1):**

Initiate a consumer advisory council that includes all programs? and will assist the Center in developing advocacy priorities for the center's service area by September 2012.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### **Objective 6A(2):**

Developing staff and consumers to increase cross-disability participation in agency advocacy efforts with the result of an increase of 10% in consumer turnout and participation in agency advocacy events.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

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### Goal 6B:

Develop a strategy that will review the many advocacy issues facing people with disabilities.

### Objective 6A(3):

Review focus group results and with input from the staff and other constituencies such as the proposed consumer advisory council, develop a priority list of advocacy issues that need to be addressed (healthcare access, physical access, communications access, etc). The first version of this list should be available for use by October 2012.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

## 7<sup>TH</sup> GOAL AREA—EXPAND SERVICES TO UN-SERVED/UNDERSERVED CONSTITUENCIES

### Goal 7A:

Develop a strategy for outreaching to un-served/under-served constituencies in the Center service area.

### Objective 7A(1):

Review the center's Data Management System to identify possible areas of improvement for outreach and increased emphasis on service delivery. The first review with recommendations should be accomplished by December 2012

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Objective 7A(2):

Develop a strategy to begin to address outreach and service needs in the populations identified in previous objective in the service area by June 2014.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Objective 7A(3):

Increase our multicultural staff representation by at least 10% based on the analysis of the center's database management system, to meet the un-served and underserved communities in our service area by June 2013.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

## 8<sup>th</sup> GOAL AREA— IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN FACILITY AND OPERATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

(i.e. technology planning, vehicles, and capital improvements) see 5 year improvement plan

### Goal: 8A

Assure maintenance of the NILP facility physical structure.

#### Objective 8A1

Improve ADA Accessibility of Building by December, 2011.

Importance:       Essential       Important       Desirable

#### Objective 8A2.

Replace sign at front of building by August 2012.

Importance:       Essential       Important       Desirable

#### Objective 8A3

Repave, seal and reline the parking lot and driveways by December, 2012.

Importance:       Essential       Important       Desirable

#### Objective 8A4

Complete building exterior repair, painting and landscaping by October 2013.

Importance:       Essential       Important       Desirable

#### Objective 8A5

Improve building electric utility closet area to reduce hazard by December 2013.

Importance:       Essential       Important       Desirable

#### Objective 8A6

Upgrade the current burglar alarm system by December 2013.

Importance:       Essential       Important       Desirable



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### Goal 8B

Assure financing of the facility

#### Objective 8B1

Re-establish financing for the NILP facility mortgage by 2013

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

#### Objective 8B2

Determine the feasibility of continuing a tenant in the NILP facility and reassess the terms of the tenancy by June 2012

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Goal 8C

Assure reliable transportation via agency vehicles

#### Objective 8C1

Maintain agency vehicles through annual inspections and semi-annual tune-ups and maintenance checks.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

#### Objective 8C2

Review and assess feasibility of the purchasing a replacement vehicle by 2016

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Goal 8D

Maintain an effective technology infrastructure

#### Objective 8D1

Maintain an efficiently operating agency by annually reviewing the current desktop technology and maintain an inventory of the existing technology. Evaluate areas where the current technology is not meeting needs.

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

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### Objective 8D2

Based upon the results of objective 8D1 develop a plan to update a percentage of the agency's technology on an annual basis

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Goal 8E

Identify sources of low/no cost hardware and software

### Objective 8E1

Identify potential sources of technology among the agency's community and business partners on an annual basis

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Objective 8E2

Identify sources of technology that provide low/no cost technology to non-profit agencies and apply for needed hardware/software

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

### Goal 8F

Identify the technology/resources needed to support goal 4A-updating the website/maintaining a presence on Facebook

### Objective 8F1

Document the requirements for maintaining the agency's website and a Facebook page. Both the technology and human resources needed to keep the sites updated should be included in the plan by 2012

**Importance:**       Essential       Important       Desirable

**9<sup>TH</sup> GOAL AREA- REVIEW EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AS AN EXPANSION POSSIBILITY**

**Goal 9A:**

Review employment services as an option for center expansion.

**Objective 9A(1):**

With input from consumer advisory council, analysis of the focus group results, and input from the Board of Directors, develop a proposed strategy for possible expansion into employment services by FY15.

Importance:

Essential

Important

Desirable

# **Attachments**

**ATTACHMENT 1-----5 YEAR IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**ATTACHMENT 2-----SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP RESULTS; RESULTS FROM CONSUMER FOCUS GROUP**

**ATTACHMENT 1**

**Northeast Independent Living Program, Inc.**

**Five-year Improvement Plan (2011-2015)**

**Issues:**

- 1 2011-2012: Replace sign at front of building.**
  - 1) Cost out a new sign including design, installation and painting, etc.
  - 2) Also cost out necessary landscaping associated with this project including tree removal costs. Three vendors have prepared a bid for design and construction of sign. Prepare funding options. Work to be done December, 2011 through August, 2012 pending approved funding.
  
- 2 2011-2012: Improve ADA Accessibility of Building**
  - 1) Check for any other violations of the ADA? (ADA Consultant)
  - 2) Identify funding resources
  - 3) Identify costs associated with effort
  - 4) Identify possible contractors for project  
Automatic Door opener at front of building has had switch repaired in 2011 including replacing transmitter and lengthened antenna and is now operating fine.
  
- 3 2011-2012: Repave, seal and reline the parking lot and driveways.**

Present paving is at least 15+ years old and beginning to fail. Rebuild the front area near the entrance to eliminate the standing pool of water after every rainstorm. Identify possible funders and associated costs. Secure at least three or more bids for project. This has been deferred to 2012.
  
- 4. 2012-2013: Building exterior repair, painting and landscaping.**

Investigate major landscaping and building repair to the entire property. A few of the major items it includes are:

  - 1) the removal and replacement of the bushes by the doors, front of the building and along-side the building.
  - 2) removing all the stains from the building, repainting the whole structure and replacing dirt around building.
  - 3) replacing all the bark mulch surrounding the building and the property.
  
- 5. 2012-2013: Improve Building Electric Utility Closet area to reduce hazard.**
  - 1) Identify unneeded wiring and removal.
  - 2) Label existing working cables, etc.
  - 3) Identify electrical and telephone contractors involved.
  - 4) Identify possible costs of clean up.

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5) Identify possible funding resources

**6. 2012-2013: Upgrade the current burglar alarm system** and include the Asian Center portion of the building that currently is not covered by the alarm system

8/19/2011

### Improvement Projects Completed:

**1. 2009-2010: Replace entire asphalt roof on NILP building in 2009-2010**

Continued leaking during the winter of 2008 to 2009 indicates many flaws and deterioration of shingles. Seven bids had been secured. Vendor was selected, Wooster Roofing of Tewksbury, MA at a cost of \$45,000.00 including removal of old materials and inclusion of 6 feet of ice shield. Install circuits and re-install roof heating cables to prevent ice dams and leaking.

**Project Completed November 2, 2010. Paid for in total.**

**2. 2009-2010: Improve existing sprinkler system and/or add second sprinkler system to building attic.**

Identify needs. Several episodes during 2008 to 2009 indicate many flaws in this fire sprinkler system. Simplex-Grinnell had been retained to make repairs and an estimate for a major replacement of the existing sprinkler system in 2009 to 2010. Additional estimates had been solicited. New compressor installed in 2009.

Tremont Contracting engaged to complete project for \$44,000

**Project Completed, March, 2010.**

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## ATTACHMENT 2

### STRATEGIC PLANNING FOCUS GROUP

#### CONSUMER GROUP

8/3/11

#### Question 1: What do you know about NILP and what it does for the community?

##### A. Services that NILP provides to people with disabilities

- a. PCA Program
- b. Help you find a wheelchair company or switch if you need a new one
- c. They help you when you call, if they know of a resource that you need they help you get it
- d. They have helped me understand the process and have been very helpful in finding the resources that I need
- e. They helped me get a baby crier that is hooked to a strobe light and a bed alarm so that I know when my baby is crying

##### B. What are some issues that NILP could address better?

- No one in the program presented me with the help in attempting to get a wheelchair after my injury
- Failure to communicate the resources and services that are available
- Outings and doesn't know what else

#### Question 2: In thinking about NILP programs, what do we do best?

##### A. NILP provides essential services that make a real difference in the lives of consumers.

- a. NILP is a lifeline because if you have a disability and are not involved with an agency like NILP you are basically on a boat with no oars because you do not know where to go. But you have to initiate, you need to talk to your worker and explain what you need and then they help you.
- b. They advocate for you even if you need someone to step in on your behalf, you will have them in your corner to help you get your point across to third parties
- c. I feel NILP is good at discussing things that I need, like if I say I need an apartment they have been very good at helping me get it
- d. They provide an environment where anyone can feel safe, when I come here I don't feel like I am being stared at like I do when I step out into the world at large

##### B. Issues that NILP can better address

- a. Support Groups-not aware of them
- b. Better communication with consumers to let them know what the center does and provides.

#### Question 3: What are some of the unmet needs for consumers in the community?

## **NILP STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2017**

### **A. Issues that NILP should address that will help people with disabilities live more independently**

- a. A support group for parents with disabilities or other ways to provide support
- b. Sign language classes for parents who have kids that are hearing
- c. There should a little more help for people with disabilities that have money issues
  - Someone that can advocate for them more than a lawyer
- d. Housing
  - Persons with disabilities have unique challenges when attempting to find housing
- e. Money Management
- f. Assistance with MassHealth forms
- g. Groups in which consumers with different skills can assist each other
- h. Health Care Assistance provider that focuses specifically on Health related issues and insurance
  - Specifically in the Deaf Community as the nurse that we have on staff at NILP is heavily booked and is primarily for hearing persons with physical disabilities
- i. Expand access to video phones
- j. Expand access to technology

### **B. Things NILP could do better to inform consumers about services NILP provides**

- a. Knowledge packet that can be given to new consumers that will give them a brief overview of the resources that are available and are specific to their community
- b. The services are worker dependent and there is no set pattern of care that is equal across the board
- c. Lack of communication about the services that the agency offers
- d. PCA users are not receiving access to developing their own independent living plan

### **Question 4: What are the current trends in the field of independent living that NILP can address now or in the future?**

#### **A. How can NILP address Employment issues for consumers?**

- a. Employment/volunteer opportunities
- b. Peer role modeling
- c. Benefits counseling
- d. Not set limitations or expectations for persons with disabilities and teach them that they can go as far they want
- e. Peer Groups

#### **B. What other issues should NILP address that will assist consumers to live more independently?**

- a. Transportation assistance
  - Learning how to use public transportation



## NILP STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2017

- b. Social Security having interpreters or employees that are able to sign and communicate directly with the consumers
- c. Advocacy – Learning how to get your voice heard
  - Strength in numbers
  - Information on how to sign up to get facts about what is happening in congress
  - Groups to teach advocacy and inform consumers about relevant issues

**Question 5: What programs and services would you like NILP to provide, improve upon or discontinue?**

**A. What new services can NILP provide that can advance Independent Living?**

- a. Many deaf and hard of hearings consumers have said they wish that NILP's DHILS program provided more workshops and social events
- b. Accessible classes with interpreters, etc.
  - i. Driver's Ed
- c. Employment Workshops for consumers
  - i. Resume development, job coaching, interviewing skills, etc.
- d. Collaborate with other agencies in developing training for the deaf and hard of hearing regarding the driver's ed written test
- e. Collaborating with other agencies regarding advocacy and other issues that encompass all the groups that are served in NILP
- f. Email updates/ quarterly newsletters
- g. Access to assistive technology
  - i. Getatstuff.com
- h. Higher frequency of social events that are held at NILP
- i. Informational table at all NILP social events to make consumers aware of the services that we provide
- j. Expanding access to Epic theater to all programs outside of the Teenfest program
  - i. It is beneficial for all persons, adults as well
- k. Get more consumer involvement in providing resources and help for other consumers
  - i. Consumer collaboration
  - ii. Allow consumers to volunteer

**B. What things can NILP do to make itself more recognized in the community?**

- a. How large is NILP and who does it serve?
- b. Promote what NILP does through the media and other strategies