

## THE RESOURCE CONNECTION



In 1977, a group of public employees from two rural counties in California began meeting with the Mountain Sisters Collective, a woman’s group concerned about issues facing the community – notably the lack of adequate child care and increasing rates of domestic violence. Both groups worried that local families needed additional services beyond those provided by county agencies, and that rural areas were increasingly challenged to meet the unique needs of dispersed populations. In 1980, a nonprofit organization was formed: Human Resources Council (HRC), which opened its doors with a staff of four. Over the next two decades, HRC grew to include numerous services and programs needed by the residents of Calaveras and Amador counties.

In 2007, HRC – by then a large multi-county, multi-service agency with a staff of about 150– decided it was time for the organization to better reflect its professionalism, its purpose, and its presence. The organization approached Fern Tiger Associates (FTA) to help it become more strategic in its approach to program development, outreach, and fundraising – especially as it looked ahead to an ambitious, first-time capital campaign for a proposed building development project.

After initial interviews with program managers, administrative staff, and board members, it became

*The Resource Connection (formerly Human Resources Council) changed its mission to better reflect its philosophy. Its new mission is “Engage families. Empower communities. Enrich lives.”*



*The Resource Connection is a nearly 30-year-old organization that serves two rural counties in California (Amador and Calaveras) and offers a broad and varied range of programs for children, families and individuals, including child care and referrals, nutrition programs, a food bank, a women’s shelter, domestic violence prevention programs, and legal services.*

apparent that HRC lacked a unified vision for the future, and despite many good programs, had become a collection of separate departments — each moving in its own leadership, direction, and even its own identity (graphic as well as personal). Even the plan for the new site (the impetus that brought the organization to FTA in the first place) was not universally supported by the board and staff. It was obvious to FTA that these issues impacted HRC’s identity, visibility, and credibility, and that the lack of cohesion would impact the organization’s thinking about branding, outreach, and communications.

In August 2007, FTA began a comprehensive strategic planning process to develop a set of proactive goals and strategies to move HRC forward – to be followed by a complete re-branding.

To develop A Plan to Engage Families, Empower Communities, and Enrich Lives, FTA facilitated two full-day board/manager retreats and three focused follow-up sessions with the board. In preparation for these sessions, FTA provided extensive organizational and demographic background information and assessments (including a findings report, based on interviews with approximately 75 community members) to guide the board in clarifying the organization’s mission and direction for its future.

In addition, FTA drafted a set of “thought papers” to support discussion on particular issues related to the organization’s future.



During the course of the plan’s development, and as a result of the findings report, the board determined that the organization’s 30-year-old name – Human Resources Council – no longer reflected the agency. As the report indicated, the term “human resources” was now heavily identified with personnel and employment matters and the agency was often confused with Amador and/or Calaveras county governments because of the term “council.”

FTA worked with the board to conceive a set of possible names, ultimately selecting “The Resource Connection” as the name that embodied the actual role played by the large, complex organization which had grown from four staff members to 150 and that included diverse and previously disjointed services and programs (nutrition, child care, food bank, domestic violence prevention, women’s shelter, etc.) The plan included a process to move the siloed programs into a cohesive whole through the development of three distinct program areas: Children and Families; Food and Nutrition; and Prevention and Intervention.



