

DECEMBER 2024

Social Equity Council Strategic Plan



Executive Summary

The State of Connecticut Social Equity Council (SEC) partnered with Slalom to develop a 3-Year strategic plan.

Slalom leveraged input and perspectives from SEC Council and Staff to identify and prioritize the work required to enable the SEC to fulfill its mission of supporting Social Equity Entrepreneurs and reinvesting in the communities most impacted by the war on drugs.

The Council is committed to initiatives to improve the following areas:

- **SEC Staff:** Structure and enable the SEC Staff to support the goals of the three-year strategic plan
- **Council Operations:** Clarify roles and responsibilities of the Council and align its effort to stated program outcomes
- **Community Reinvestment:** Align on distinct Community Reinvestment focus areas and set measurable impact goals
- **Social Equity Entrepreneur Support:** Understand and fix the end-to-end canna-business entrepreneur experience

Slalom and the SEC have defined a Strategic Roadmap comprised of eleven initiatives spanning these four focus areas. The execution of this roadmap will require an evolution of the SEC's culture, operating model, ways of working, and an embrace of data and measurement to drive community investment and the Council's decision making.

This presentation summarizes Slalom's research findings, analysis and roadmap recommendations.

Our Approach to creating a Strategic Plan for the SEC

Slalom used a four-step approach to create a Strategic Plan that was grounded in insights and built collaboratively with staff and Council.



Research

Reviewed SEC statute, previous analysis, and conducted interviews and focus groups with select SEC Council and Staff members



Workshops

Conducted workshops with key stakeholders to align on a Mission & Vision for the SEC and identify future state opportunities by priority focus area



Initiatives

Grouped opportunities and future state recommendations into initiatives and estimated resource and timing requirements



Roadmap

Mapped initiatives by focus area and sequenced on a 3-year Roadmap based on priority, dependencies and resource availability

Social Equity Council revised Mission

Together, we revised the SEC's mission to be present-oriented, action-based and specific.

To promote **equitable economic prosperity** by supporting **Social Equity Entrepreneurs** and reinvesting in the communities **most impacted** by the war on drugs.

Social Equity Council Vision for the future

We also developed a future-oriented, inspirational and idealistic vision for the future.

**The communities most impacted by the war on drugs are
prosperous and thriving.**

Strategic Focus Areas & Initiatives

Together, we identified 11 initiatives aligned to 4 focus areas, all designed to achieve the new mission & vision.

Focus Areas & Statements	STAFF	COUNCIL	COMMUNITY	INDUSTRY
	Structure the SEC Staff to support the 3-year strategic plan	Align the role of The Council to the 3-year strategic plan	Align on priority DIA's & highest impact focus areas	Define end-to-end canna-business experience & align programs to support it
Initiatives	<p>01 Develop operating model to align with strategic plan and focus areas</p> <p>02 Create organizational model that aligns to operating model and identifies current and future state staffing needs</p> <p>03 Reset staff culture to develop supportive and collaborative working environment</p> <p>04 Establish program expertise across the staff, inclusive of the statute that drive the work</p>	<p>05 Integrate Council and staff across programs and ways of working to ensure expertise support with staff leading subcommittees</p> <p>06 Align ways of working across council and staff with clear subcommittees and working norms</p>	<p>07 Define strategy and guidelines for community reinvestment focus to align the path forward</p> <p>08 Establish success criteria and measurement for reinvestment programs to ensure goals are achieved and reported</p>	<p>09 Develop end-to-end entrepreneur journey that includes all touchpoints and identifies gaps for improvement</p> <p>10 Restructure loan program to remove barriers for applicants and foster economic growth</p> <p>11 Develop comprehensive workforce development approach to enhance job opportunities and facilitate growth in underserved communities</p>
METRICS: Ensure all initiatives & programs have specific trackable metrics				
CULTURE: Prioritize open communication, continuous learning, and mutual respect, ensuring an inclusive and positive work environment				

Initiative Mapping

Estimated value & complexity of each initiative

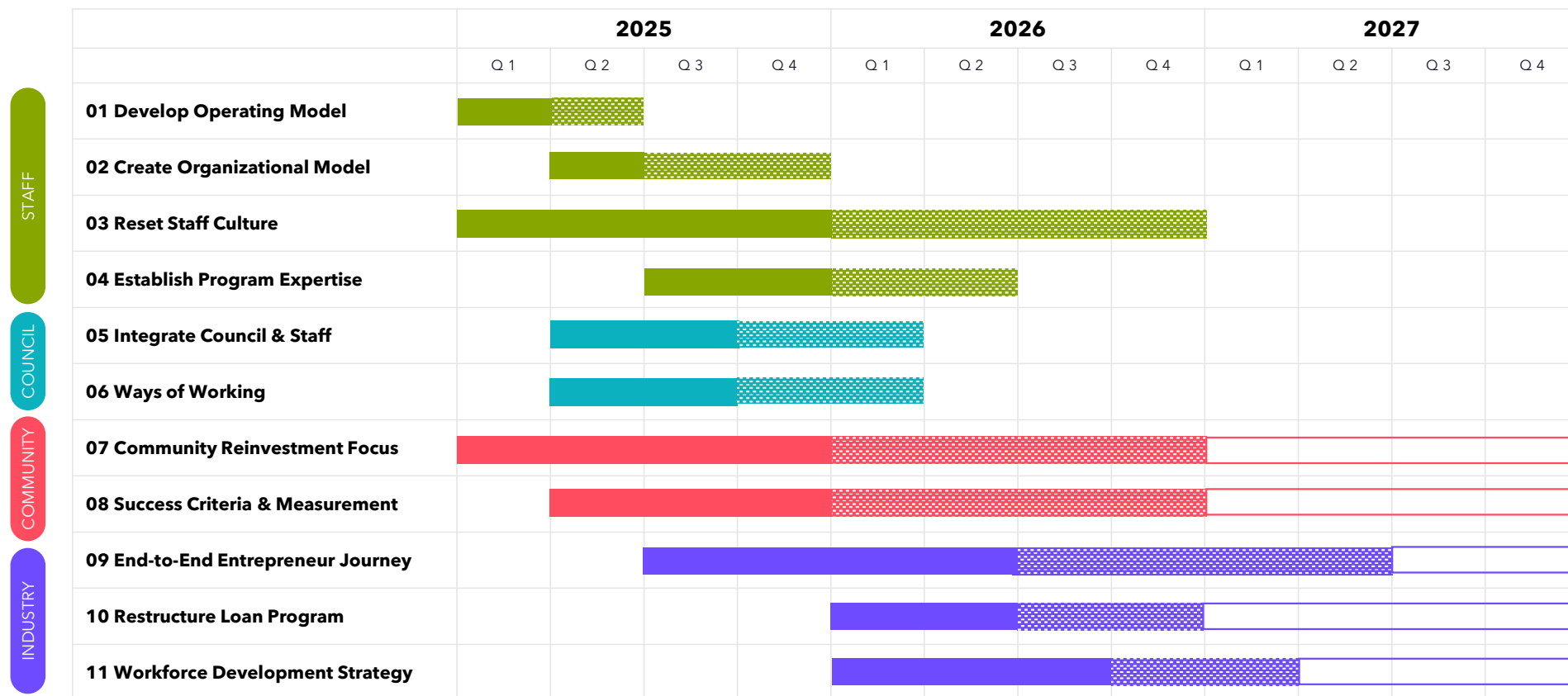
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QUICK WINS	01	Develop Operating Model
	02	Create Organizational Model
	09	End-to-End Entrepreneur Journey
BIG BETS	03	Reset Staff Culture
	07	Community Reinvestment Focus
	08	Success Criteria & Measurement
	11	Workforce Development Approach
EXPLORE	04	Establish Program Expertise
	10	Restructure Loan Program
REASSESS	05	Integrate Council & Staff
	06	Ways of Working



Three Year Roadmap

Key: Design/Transformation Measure/Adjust Continuous Monitoring

Recommended initiative sequencing based on priority and dependencies that enable an action-oriented Strategic Plan.



01 Research Findings & Themes

Research Approach

We conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with over 11 council & staff members.



**Co-leads of Strategic
Investment Committee**



**Executive
Director**



**Chief Operations
Officer**



Legal Director



Council Chair



**Governors
Appointee**



**House Majority
Leader Appointee**



**Office of
Governor
Appointee**



**Black and Puerto
Rican Caucus
Chair Appointee**



**Program
Manager**

FOCUS GROUPS

1:1 INTERVIEWS

Four key themes emerged from our research

Overall, the opportunity to “reset” and focus on the future was a common thread.

01

Tense Culture

There has been significant leadership changes, negative press, and a comptroller’s report that has created stress and mistrust across the team and with the council. The result has been a working environment that lacks trust and accountability.

02

Operating Model Misalignment

The council is comprised of volunteers with multiple priorities and the staff has been in flux since the departure of the previous ED. This has created lack of clarity around roles, ownership, and decision making.

03

Improving the Applicant Experience

Poor internal and external process definition and communication has led to inconsistent scoring, a perception of subjectivity, missed SLAs and a poor applicant experience.

04

Program Definition and Measuring Success

Now that the mission has been aligned on, the SEC needs to define how to objectively measure success broadly and by program.

01 Recent change and scrutiny has led to a tense internal culture

Reflection

There have been significant leadership changes, negative press, and a comptroller's report that has created stress and mistrust across the team and with the council. The result has been a working environment that lacks trust and accountability.

Themes & Keywords



Challenging work environment



Willingness to reset



Face to face connection needed



Hopeful for a new direction

Pain Points

- Team has been impacted by leadership changes, media attention and comptroller's report, contributing to **internal conflict**
- Historically, the staff and Council have been kept separate, this contributes to a lack of understanding about **roles and breakdowns in communication**
- Many Council members have never met in person or had the opportunity to form **working relationships**
- The Staff has **interpersonal challenges** rooting back to former leadership. It has created divisions, lack of communication, and inconsistent outcomes

Opportunities

- Leverage new leadership and team members to **"reset"** team norms, behaviors and expectations.
- Provide regular opportunities for staff and council to come together and **collaborate** in person
- Create a **culture of feedback**, and develop performance evaluation cadence

02 Leadership changes and unclear role definition has led to **operating model misalignment**

Reflection

The council is comprised of volunteers with multiple priorities and the staff has been in flux since the departure of the previous ED. This has created lack of clarity around roles, ownership, and decision making.

Themes & Keywords



Need clear operating model



Lots of committees, who is doing the work?



Lack of data to inform decisions



Ownership of outcomes

Pain Points

- Appointees volunteer their time, and don't always have the capacity to **"own" vs. "advise"**
- The council isn't immersed full-time, and sometimes **lack the full context** to make informed decisions
- Perceived lack of accountability and ownership of **program outcomes**
- Lack of **communication channels** and working relationship between council and staff
- Confusion with **nomenclature** of the Staff and the Council (all SEC)

Opportunities

- **Refine the role** of the council and its subcommittees, operate like an advisory board
- Ensure that **council is prepped** well ahead of decisions being required
- Establish **rules of engagement** across staff and council
- Redefine **committees** to be led by staff, with council advising
- Reset **program ownership roles** and align metrics and accountability
- Consider **renaming** the council to the Board

03 Lack of clarity and disjointed processes create a confusing applicant experience

Reflection

Poor internal and external process definition and communication has led to inconsistent scoring, a perception of subjectivity, missed SLAs and a poor applicant experience.

Themes & Keywords



Poor customer service



Applicant confusion & frustration



Consuming applicant time and money



No ownership of end-to-end experience

Pain Points

- **Unclear** application process and **timeline expectations** for applicants
- **Inconsistent scoring** and/or application of rubric
- **Technology** doesn't support operational demand management and workload balancing for staff
- New legislation mandates approval decision within 30 days, but we're still **missing deadlines**

Opportunities

- Working with CohnReznick to **increase transparency** and **objectivity** of application process
- Create **clear calls to action** (CTAs) and guide applicants through the various approval journeys (i.e., equity plans, loans, grants)
- Leverage **workflow software** and digital document repository to drive application process uniformity and timeliness
- Increase one- and two-way **communication with applicants**, increasing awareness of services and reducing uncertainty during the
- Map out the **end-to-end user experience** and identify opportunities for improvement

04 Lack of internal alignment has led to poorly defined programs and limited success measures

Reflection

Now that the mission has been aligned on, the SEC needs to establish and align on program-level objectives, priorities and success criteria to drive accountability and measure effectiveness.

Themes & Keywords



Be a thought partner for policy makers



Reinvestment brings most attention



Investments appear haphazard



Limited metrics to drive long-term

Pain Points

- Have not been able to **measure** or roll up the **impact** of first round of grants
- Limited to no aligned **metrics, tracking, and accountability** across programs
- Sense of “use it or lose it” funding led to **rushed** community reinvestment allocation
- Reinvestment funding program **lacks a defined strategy** and thus has defaulted to a “sprinkle” approach, allocating funding in many different areas without specific focus
- Perception that workforce development has had **limited measurable success**

Opportunities

- Define short- and long-term program Objectives and Key Results
- Define **Community Reinvestment strategy**, approach (e.g., focused impact vs. spread out) and impact measurement plan
- Develop clear **grant distribution strategy** and communicate to grant makers
- Define audience(s) for **workforce development** efforts and develop strategy and plan to support them

02 Strategic Initiatives & Roadmap

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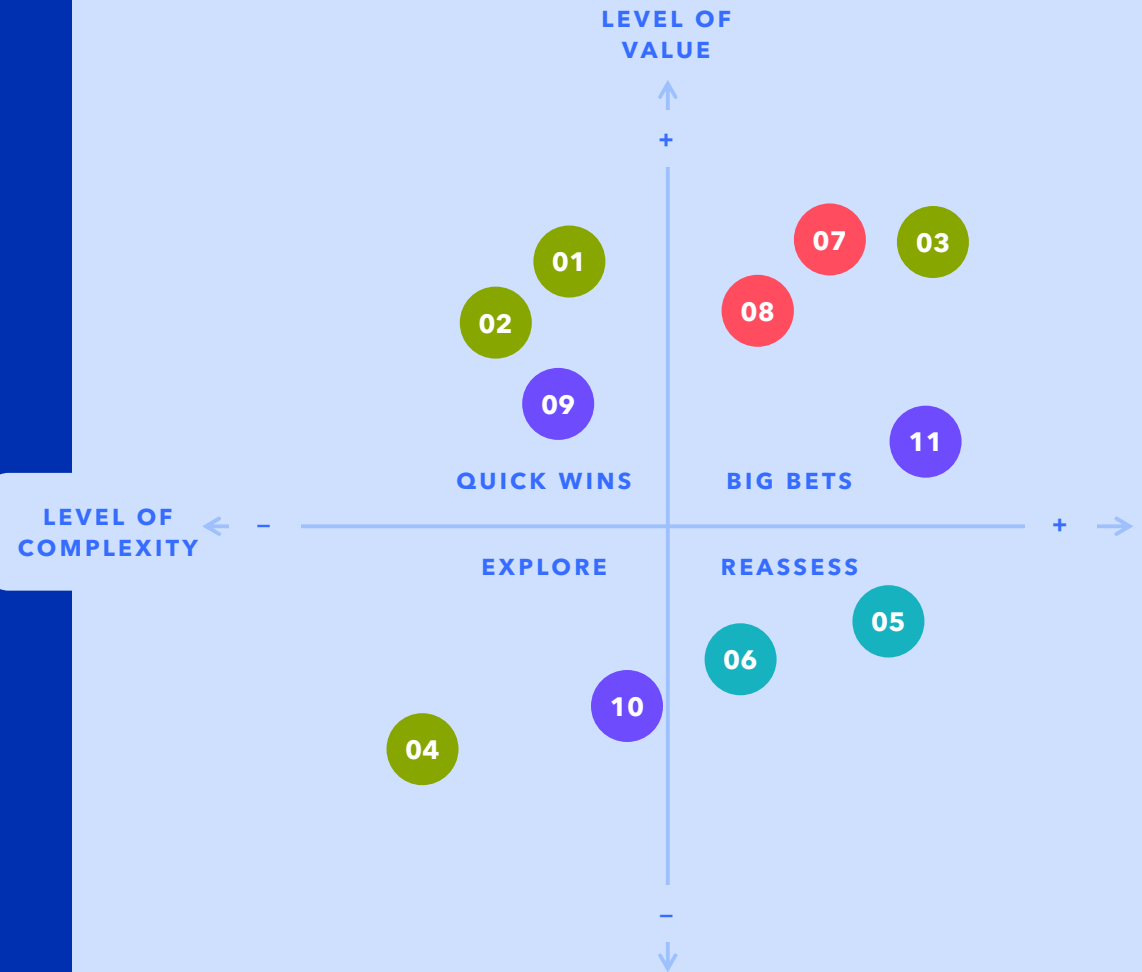
What do we need to do to achieve our mission and vision?

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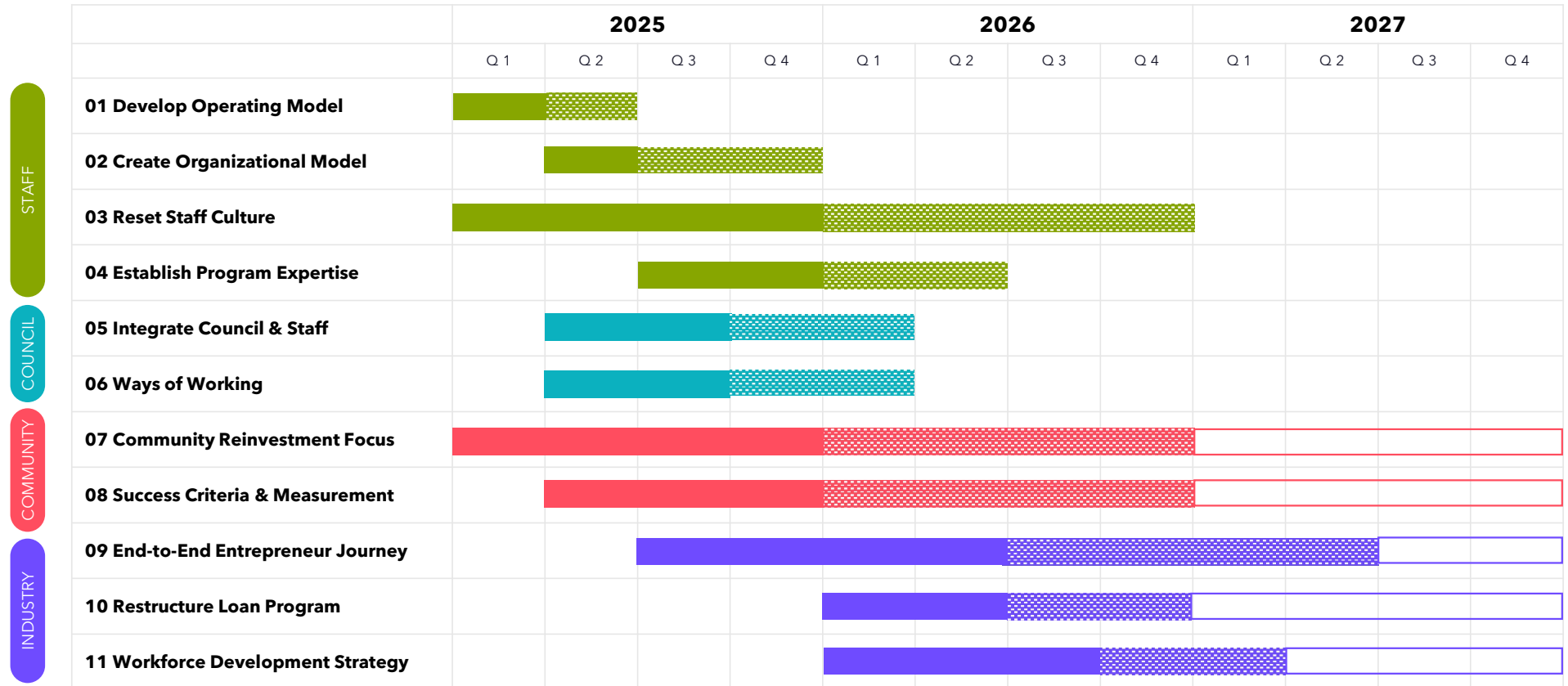
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3 Year Roadmap

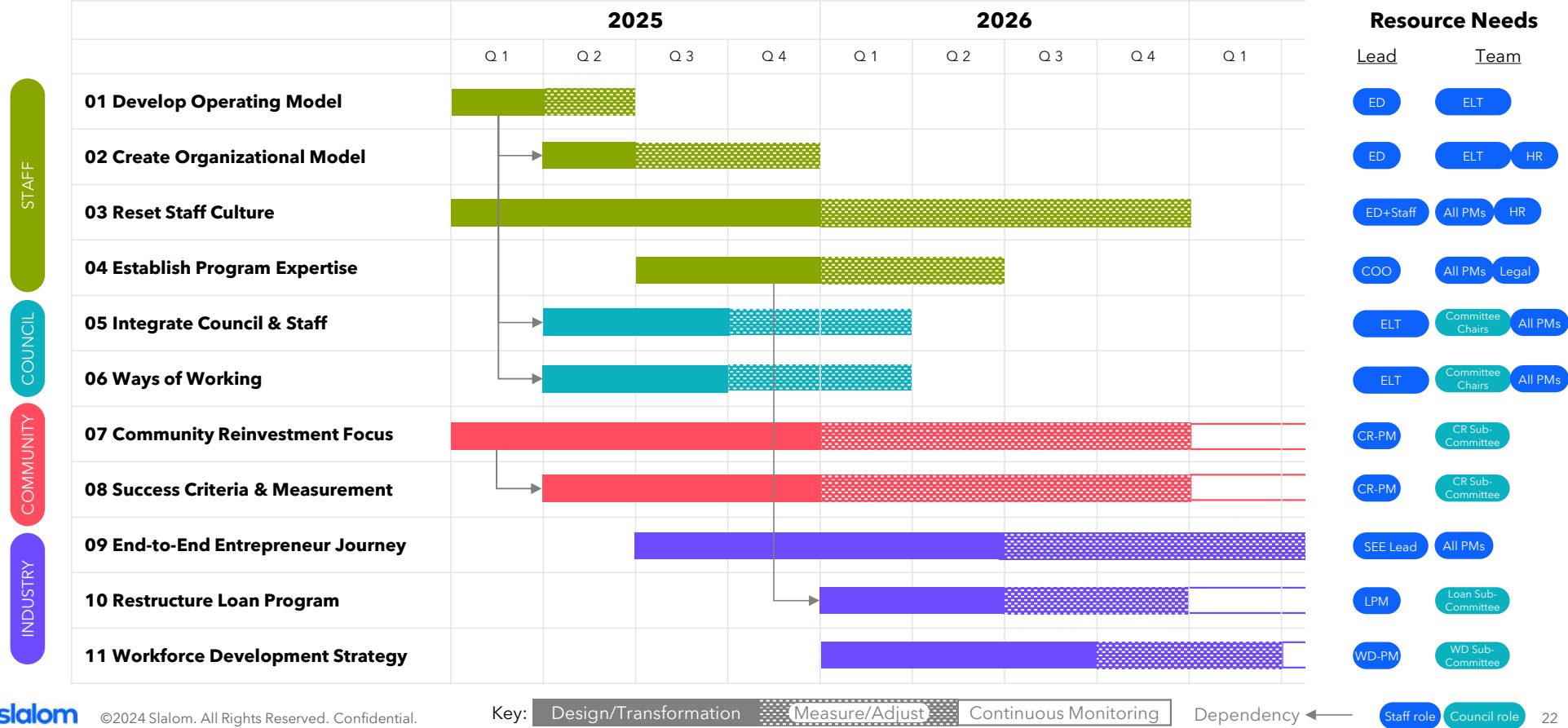
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3 year roadmap with resource leads & dependencies

Roadmap shown with SEC Council & Staff resource needs and cross-initiative dependencies.



Operational Model Drilldown

Functional model, boxes do not always equate to FTEs

