Pacific Lifeline is much more than a homeless shelter. After spending the fall semester off-campus, I entered our client relationship halfway through the year . This transition initially appeared challenging, but Pacific Lifeline’s mission, history, and energy made the process seamless. In the end, through our year-long partnership, our team was able to help Pacific Lifeline increase the efficiency of its mission through our work on strategically planning, board development, and web development.

Pacific Lifeline is a homeless shelter for women and children in the San Bernardino and Los Angeles area that empowers residents to achieve personal and social stability. Many families in the shelter are escaping domestic violence, adding even more gravity to their work. In just 2016, Pacific Lifeline’s impact reached far beyond that of a shelter:

* *Nine women received weekly case management, individual therapy, and group therapy sessions.*
* *Thirteen children received weekly tutoring, individual therapy, and they participated in weekly group activities.*
* *Nine women participated in bi-monthly life skill development workshops.*
* *At the end of 2016, of the nine families served that year, four moved into permanent housing and five continued to live in the shelter.*
* *76 children received back to school supplies and clothing.*
* *35 families had access to food, clothing and basic necessities, household items, Thanksgiving food and Christmas gifts, and community resource referrals.*

Pacific Lifeline's impact is made possible thanks to the thoughtful leadership of Carmen and Kirsten, a large staff of counselors, teachers and case managers.

One of Pacific Lifeline's major opportunities for growth was in board development. Pacific Lifeline had a strong board that was comprised of many longtime members from all around the country who cared deeply about the mission of the organization. Unfortunately, many of these board members did not have the capacity to perform their expected duties to their full extent. In the fall of 2016, our team created a board development manual and an onboarding presentation, following months of collaboration with Pacific Lifeline’s leadership. These assets will enable board members to understand the organization and their role before starting on the board, and also increase the efficiency of the board by clarifying, and ensuring expectations and responsibilities are met.

Outside of board development, we took on three diverse projects in the spring semester: redesigning Pacific Lifeline’s website and newsletter, and creating a strategic plan. Our website and email newsletter redesigns provided Pacific Lifeline with more professional avenues to show their donors how they were using resources to make a real impact in the community.

A strategic plan was then built with these new assets in mind. After interviewing key stakeholders, we performed a SWOT analysis, by examining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of current practices and resources. We then split our analysis up among three pain points explicated during the interview process: fundraising, communication, and human capital. *Fundraising* focused on donor relations and their diversified sources of donations. *Communication* examined how information was shared within the organization and how those in different roles and schedules could efficiently communicate, to provide the best services and improve their pursuit of grants. Lastly, *human capital* emphasized an increase in, and development of Pacific Lifeline’s manpower.

The results of our deliverables are already seen at PLL:

*We’ve already used the deliverables in grant proposals and in our recent board meeting. We will be starting to work on the action items; it breaks down tasks that need to be addressed – making them much easier to tackle!*

-Kirsten Gnubb, Pacific Lifeline

It was an honor working with Pacific Lifeline. Kirsten and Carmen were eager to work *with* us. SOURCE’s biggest takeaways from our relationship with Pacific Lifeline are to take advantage of pre-existing resources and networks when applicable, but to not be wary to think outside the box when bright ideas and further improve an organization.