



AL QASIMI FOUNDATION STRATEGIC SUMMARY

2019-2023



INTRODUCTION

We are in a strong position at the Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research to grow our impact over the next five, 10, and 20 years. His Highness Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi, Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, has a vision to transform education and the quality of life in the emirate, and the Foundation continues to work and contribute to meeting and achieving this vision. Having celebrated our 10th anniversary in 2019, we have begun to see the effects of our work.

We are especially proud of how we have begun to positively influence public policy, decision making, and the education sector in Ras Al Khaimah. Our local and international reputation for high-quality research and publications has grown, influencing the field of education in Ras Al Khaimah, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and beyond. Our research on boys in education has led to increased focus on their educational experience across the UAE. We are also proud to be the founding body and creator of the Gulf Comparative Education Society, which allows academics and policymakers to share best practices in education across the Gulf region. Our partnerships with local educators have supported their professional development and improved schools' classroom level practices, building a community of professionals who can draw on one another's expertise and support.

In addition to education, our work in the arts and culture has been increasingly recognized, and our Ras Al Khaimah Fine Arts Festival in particular has become a valued annual event that brings a rich cultural experience to the Northern Emirates. Its success has led to year-round creative arts programming—including workshops and exhibitions—that complement our other event offerings, collectively providing a variety of opportunities for cross-cultural exchange among Ras Al Khaimah Emirati and expatriate residents.



As a Foundation, we play multiple roles in Ras Al Khaimah. We are uniquely situated as the royal family's philanthropic foundation to make grants and run programs that improve education and other social issues in the emirate. We also serve as an internal think tank for the Ras Al Khaimah Government, as well as an action research institute influencing policy in Ras Al Khaimah and throughout the region. In all of these roles, we strive to work in an innovative, flexible way that responds to the needs of the Ras Al Khaimah community and takes advantage of new opportunities as they arise.

In our desire to be responsive to the needs and wishes of Ras Al Khaimah residents, while also bringing innovation and fresh ideas to the emirate, we seek to be both rooted in the community and globally minded. This strategic plan was developed with robust input from community members in Ras Al Khaimah, as well as governmental, private sector, and social sector partners in the emirate, the UAE, and abroad. The process to develop the strategic plan included interviews with His Highness Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi, other members of the royal family, staff at the Foundation, and 25 individuals in Ras Al Khaimah and abroad. Particularly influential to this process were focus groups held with educators, students who have participated in the Foundation's programs, and the parents of those students. We are grateful to all the individuals involved in helping to shape the development of this plan.

Our strategic plan lays out the Foundation's vision for the five years: 2019- 2023. It includes strategic goals where the Foundation would like to continue to have an impact and develop new areas of work.

The Foundation's vision is inspiring, and its mission is ambitious. Ras Al Khaimah, under the leadership of His Highness, is positioned to grow and evolve as an emirate and serve as a welcoming place to live with a high-quality of life. We are an honored partner in these efforts and look forward to the five years and beyond.



STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

WHAT WE ARE BUILDING ON

The Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research was established in 2009 to support the social, cultural, and economic development of Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Al Qasimi Foundation seeks to support the public and private sectors by helping them ground policy decisions and programming in evidence-based research that reflects the best thinking in the world as well as the local Ras Al Khaimah and UAE contexts. Our work over the past 10 years has focused on generating world-class research, developing local capacity, and engaging the local community. While we continue to have a strong focus on improving education, we have also expanded our priority areas to include health, community development, and arts and culture. We have also extended our reach to target groups that are particularly disadvantaged such as those in the prison, low income students and their families, and those in the remote areas of Ras Al Khaimah.

RESEARCH INITIATIVES

The Foundation collaborates with scholars and highly ranked universities across the globe in order to bring the best global expertise to Ras Al Khaimah and the UAE. Some of the key research initiatives include Arab Father Involvement, Whole School Renewal, Hands-on-Learning, Early Grade Arabic Reading Program, Philanthropy in Education, the Gulf Comparative Education Society, and grants to support faculty and doctoral research. In 2018, the Foundation's research reached over 800 direct beneficiaries, Grade 1 students' reading comprehension in Arabic more than tripled, and 13 English and Arabic publications were completed that explored both policy and practice.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The Foundation's capacity development initiatives have focused mostly on evidence-based improvements to education. This has occurred through improving teacher quality by providing accredited professional development courses, teacher exchanges, and grants for school improvement. The Foundation has also trained inmates of the Ras Al Khaimah prison, offered students enrichment programs and overseas scholarship opportunities, provided at-risk youth life skills programming, and established formal collaborations with the Ministry of Education. In 2018, the Foundation's direct programs reached 186 teachers and 101 prisoners. Among the 113 students who participated in the College Preparation Program, 100% Grade 12 students entered their national service or attended university.

ARTS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Investing in people and our local community is at the heart of the Foundation's values and our work. We support Ras Al Khaimah in both learning from, and sharing with, the UAE and international communities on issues that are important locally and regionally. As a start-up organization, the Foundation has spent the last 10 years dedicated to bringing its mission to life, focusing most of its energy and resources accordingly. As the Foundation moves forward and builds on its success, strengthening engagement and recognition and awareness of its work will be an area of emphasis. In 2018, we held the 6th Annual Ras Al Khaimah Fine Arts Festival and engaged the community through ongoing programs and events associated with our Studio and Gallery, the Community Gathering Series, and Majlis Series. We had over 28,000 social media followers, over 4,500 newsletter recipients, more than 935 staff volunteer hours in community activities, and over 3,000 guests attend Foundation events.



VISION

Our vision is the sustained social, cultural, and economic development of Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates and enhanced capacity, satisfaction, and quality of life for all members of its community, attained through effective public policy research and strategic service delivery.

MISSION

The Foundation believes in a people-centered approach to equipping the community to find creative, collaborative approaches to aid in the development of Ras Al Khaimah. Accordingly, our mission is to make significant contributions to the social, cultural, and economic development of Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates by:

- Generating and supporting innovative, high-quality research focused on education and related policy areas in order to inform decisions and support the creation of relevant, effective public policies;
- Developing and providing strategic services and support to build individual and local capacity in education and the public sector;
- Building a spirit of community, collaboration, and shared vision through purposeful engagement that fosters creativity and meaningful relationships among individuals and organizations.



STRATEGIC GOALS

To achieve this mission and vision, the Foundation has identified five strategic goals to drive our work in 2019-2023:

- **GOAL 1**
Support an ecosystem for human development in Ras Al Khaimah, nurturing critical thinking, lifelong learning, and pathways to becoming fully engaged citizens and residents.
- **GOAL 2**
Shape local, national, and regional public policy in education and other social sectors by conducting and disseminating rigorous research.
- **GOAL 3**
Cultivate capacity as a center for social and human innovation and creativity in Ras Al Khaimah and the UAE.
- **GOAL 4**
Position the Foundation as a resource and go-to think tank organization in the UAE and broader region.
- **GOAL 5**
Nurture an internal culture of excellence with alignment across departments to achieve the Foundation's priorities and vision.



CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Underlying each of these goals and embedded throughout the plan are three cross-cutting themes that are integral to our work. These themes have emerged throughout the strategic planning process as particularly important as we look to the next phase in the lifespan of the Foundation.

They include:

1. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial thinking
2. Commitment to evaluating our impact
3. Strong partnerships and collaboration

Below we provide more details on each to highlight their importance in this 5-year plan.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Establishing the Foundation was experimental, it existed to test out the possibility of how its multiple roles as a research institute, a government think tank, and His Highness' foundation could fit together to transform education and other social sectors in Ras Al Khaimah. An entrepreneurial spirit is therefore embedded in our culture. We seek to be pioneering and creative in testing new ideas. We look to be responsive to opportunities and we are eager to try new approaches, develop new relationships, and embrace new ideas.

We also think about the future and embrace entrepreneurship itself. We want students in our programs to develop the ability to try new things, and sometimes fail, knowing that it is the next generation who will shape our country and world for years to come. This concept has been upheld by the government of the UAE, which has incorporated innovation and entrepreneurship into the education curriculum. Our approach builds on this idea, including events such as the Ras Al Khaimah Fine Arts Festival, which we created and host to expose the entire community to the arts and creative talent from the UAE and beyond.

We also want our staff to embrace new ideas and to think creatively about how to grow the impact of their work. This strategic plan therefore includes entrepreneurial approaches across all its goals, including practices such as testing ideas that are new to the region and conducting research at the forefront of education. At the same time, we have put forward a specific goal that envisions the Foundation as a center for innovation and creativity. We plan to develop an Innovation Team that takes on new ideas, tests them, and then makes decisions about which should be continued at the Foundation, which could be spun off to partners, and which simply did not work and should be discontinued. In addition to formalizing some of the structures and ways of thinking we have long had in place, an Innovation Team is also our way of demonstrating both internally and to the outside world that we are open and excited about trying new things, while remaining focused and committed to achieving our strategic goals and core purpose.



EVALUATION

In our first 10 years, we have already seen the impact of our work on individual students, on the local community, and internationally. We have stories about our students for whom attending university abroad was life changing, have uplifted local Ras Al Khaimah artists in ways that promote them and their art, and have seen how our teacher training has empowered teachers to be leaders in their classrooms and better serve their students. However, as a research institution, we seek to go beyond anecdotal findings. We want to have measurable evidence that shows our impact. In the coming five years, we will analyze and document where our approaches have made a difference, as well as approaches that did not work or were less effective. We are a learning organization, and we want our decisions about approaches and methodologies to be informed by data.

Our research capabilities position us well to develop strong measurement and evaluation procedures. We have already demonstrated our ability to conduct academic-level research in-house at the Foundation and have used it to highlight, for example, effective education methodologies. As part of this strategic plan, we now seek to infuse measurement knowledge and capacity across the entire Foundation. We will also develop cross-departmental tools, so the Foundation's department leaders are able to analyze the impact of their work and make real-time course corrections.

Knowing our interventions are having an impact will also be an important contribution to the field. As philanthropy continues to grow in the UAE and across the Gulf, we can help shape ideas and discussion by sharing our findings. We have already begun to do this through our groundbreaking research on education, and by developing rigorous evaluation systems for our internal program work, we can similarly help guide the field toward interventions that have a measurable, clear impact.

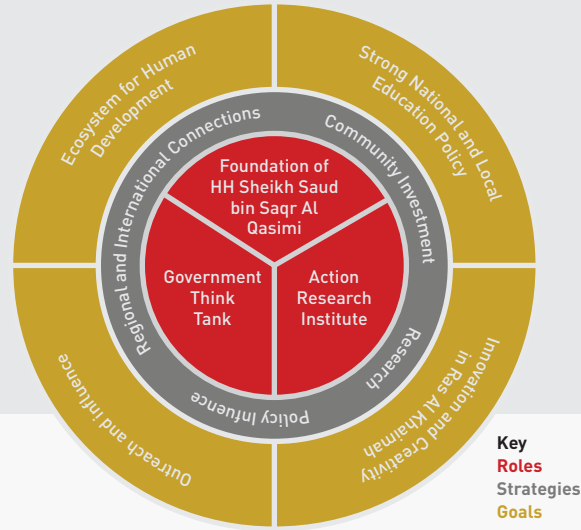


PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Since its establishment, the Foundation has collaborated with UAE-based organizations and government entities, and with international organizations, foundations, and governments. We see ourselves as an important connector on behalf of Ras Al Khaimah to others across the country, in the Gulf region, and globally. We do this by providing an avenue for external scholars to conduct research in the emirate, by supporting teacher exchanges to introduce teachers from other countries to Ras Al Khaimah and to help our local teachers learn about practices in a wide variety of countries, by supporting students to pursue education abroad, and in many other ways both formal and informal.

Given the small number of social sector actors present in Ras Al Khaimah, and the Foundation's strong reputation in the community and beyond, the Foundation frequently acts as a first stop for visitors from elsewhere who are interested in the emirate. This is true regardless of the overlap with the Foundation's strategic priorities, and we embrace this role. We plan to continue this open-door policy in the next five years, developing partnerships and assisting other organizations to achieve unanticipated positive impact in the social sector.

We also firmly believe that our work is enhanced by learning from others in the areas in which we work, and we are eager to share our own learnings with others. We plan to build upon our relationships with foundations, organizations, and universities. Our spearheading of the Gulf Comparative Education Society has been a strong example of how we have driven cross-country collaboration in the region, and we have also joined others' initiatives, for example through participation on the board of the Arab Foundations Forum. We will grow these types of collaborations in the coming years across all areas of our work.

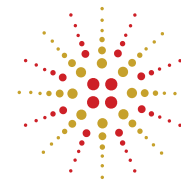


AL QASIMI FOUNDATION THEORY OF CHANGE

If we draw on our roles as His Highness' Foundation, a government think tank, and an action research institute, and we use the strategies of research, influencing policy, investing in the community, and making regional and international connections for the Foundation, then we can positively impact Ras Al Khaimah and the UAE by creating an ecosystem for human development, influencing strong national and local education policy, spurring innovation, and sharing our learnings through outreach and influence.



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