FR1ENDS of the CHILDREN
Boston

2022-2027 Strategic Plan
Greater Reach Equals Greater Impact
WHO WE ARE TODAY

Founded in Portland, Oregon in 1993, and based on the success of the Portland Program, Friends of the Children-Boston (Friends-Boston) was founded as an independent not-for-profit 501(c)(3) in 2004 as the first organization established by the GreenLight Fund in Boston.

The premise of our ambitious model is straightforward and transformative: Enter the lives of children facing the toughest challenges early, and provide them with a dedicated, caring adult who stays by their side no matter what. These paid, professional mentors are called “Friends,” and the children and youth we serve are called “Achievers” to demonstrate our belief in their potential to achieve great things!

Our Mission

Impacting generational change by empowering youth who are facing the greatest obstacles through relationships with professional mentors – 12+ years, no matter what.

Our Model

The Friends of the Children model is distinct, courageous, and proven. We have redefined the youth mentoring field by moving it out of the volunteer realm and creating the first and only long-term professional mentoring program in the country.

Friends-Boston selects children who will benefit the most from a relationship with a long-term professional mentor. Achievers face multiple systemic barriers, and most have been impacted by adverse childhood experiences. We hire and train full-time paid professional mentors, and we commit to every child for the long term, from kindergarten through graduation – 12+ years, no matter what.

Friends’ work is relationship-based, individualized, and intentional. We work with youth in school, at home, and in the community.

Our FY 2022 Impact

140 Achievers served
356 Caregivers and siblings served
13 Professional mentors worked in the program

Our GENERATIONAL CHANGE MODEL

ONE We seek out those who need us most.
Youth who have experienced and been exposed to significant adversity and trauma.

TWO We stay for the long term.
Children have a salaried Mentor (Friend) for 12+ years - kindergarten through graduation.

THREE Our model is relationship-based.
Our Friends build one-on-one relationships with our youth, and become part of their family.

FOUR We are trauma informed.
We provide potential paths for healing by recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma.

FIVE We intervene as early as age 5.
The earlier you intervene with a traumatized child, the more likely they are to overcome.

SIX We empower youth to build Core Assets.
These are nine research-based qualities for the social and emotional development of our youth.

Our Reach

Friends-Boston is based in Roxbury, but our reach stretches across Massachusetts. If Achievers relocate, we go to them.
WHO WE SERVE

Friends-Boston focuses its efforts on children and families – predominantly from communities of color – who have been overlooked, undeserved, and face systemic obstacles. They have and continue to face substantial challenges, which include issues with education and opportunity gaps, housing affordability, unmet mental health needs, learning loss during the pandemic, and mounting economic pressures on caregivers. These issues have been top of mind as Friends-Boston has considered its next chapter. In planning for our next five years, our strategic planning process has sought to recognize and address these complicated and challenging conditions.

CONDITIONS TO ADDRESS

EXTERNAL

Meeting Demands Within Our Region
Friends-Boston has historically identified future Achievers through partner BPS schools. Today, the demand for our support has drastically increased as community members and school officials across our region inquire about new potential partnerships.

Economic Conditions
Boston is the fourth most expensive city in the United States, with rents and a living wage out of reach for most of our Achievers’ families. As a result, our families are increasingly facing basic need insecurities, including housing and food.

Achiever Well-Being
Children experienced record levels of stress and mental health distress due to the pandemic, and our Achievers are particularly vulnerable. Adding to Achievers’ stress is the need to make up for learning loss due to remote learning.

INTERNAL

Opportunities to Strengthen Our Foundation
Professional mentors are stretched as they address housing, food, mental health, learning loss, and Achievers and families face unprecedented challenges. Additionally, organizational growth requires bench strength, growth opportunities, and more diverse funding.

Public Profile Creating Opportunities
As our program gains recognition for its efficacy, new partners continue to show interest in Achiever referrals for their communities. Additionally, our success has led to more calls for thought leadership and expanded partnerships with our philanthropic partners.

Continuing to Build a Diverse and Inclusive Organization
As Friends-Boston grows in reach, our team must grow to meet the additional demand. We are committed to building a team that is culturally responsive to the communities we work within while continuing to invest in our staff and our commitment to equity.
Our long-term vision is that every child in our region who needs a Friend can have one. To get there, we launched our Five-Year Strategic Growth Plan to double the number of youth served and deepen our impact in key regional communities. The plan is critical to helping us reach our long-term goal, while also expanding our geographic reach and enabling the continued growth of programming around Two Generational (2Gen) and whole child support. We will raise $20 Million to support the growth in our four main strategic priorities:

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

**Growth** Expand Our Impact

With the support of our community and many supporters, we will double our size by this plan’s completion in 2027, reaching 300 children and positioning the organization to bring our model to more communities. Our goals are:

- Expand and diversify the Boston partnership pipeline to reach more youth while alleviating sole BPS dependence
- Develop regional expansion priorities and launched key satellite locations and partnerships
- Establish the current Friends-Boston site as a demonstration site and center of excellence

**Program** Enhanced Support In Education And Mental Health

Our Achievers have always faced education and mental health challenges, and the pandemic further exacerbated these issues. We will be launching a new Clinical Practice and Support Services Team. Our goals are:

- Expand our offering in staff professional development and training
- Assemble and manage a network of vetted, accessible mental health clinicians for achievers to lower barriers to mental health care
- Expand our education support team through new education specialist positions
- Build a network of partners to improve educational outcomes
- Expand awareness of Friends-Boston in surrounding communities

**2Gen** Supporting The Whole Family

We are adapting a Two-Generational (2Gen) framework by adding enhanced services and partnerships to support caregivers and the success of the whole family. Our goals are:

- Enhance engagement in Friends-Boston’s core model with the whole family
- Invest in the hopes and dreams of the caregivers
- Build caregivers’ social capital and network
- Increase capacity of staff to engage caregivers and support the whole family.

**Bench Strength** Building Organizational Resilience

Our dedicated, multi-talented Friends are at the heart of Friends-Boston. By centering on those who commit to one-to-one service with children, we ensure that Achievers have the best Friend they can. Our goals are:

- Establish a comprehensive talent strategy
- Formalize and make intentional Friends’ values around diversity, belonging, inclusion, and equity to fulfill the mission and strengthen our infrastructure
- Strengthen our systems and teams in response to our growth.
- Elevate and diversify funding strategies to match the complexity of the proposed initiatives

Want to learn more? Contact our Executive Director Yi-Chin Chen at yichin@friendsboston.org.