

# FR1ENDS of the CH1LDREN

Seattle

---

## 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

---

### Executive Summary

Since 2000, Friends of the Children-Seattle (Friends-Seattle) continues to support youth with long-term dedicated mentorship.

As Friends-Seattle continues to navigate through the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the heightened awareness of addressing racism, it's even more critical that we are part of the solution. This means more intentionality around the inclusion of all our stakeholder voices and deepening our relationships within our community to ensure we can provide the right support in response to the current needs of youth and families.

This plan is the culmination of a 13-month planning process that involved gathering valuable input in collaboration with alumni, caregivers, staff, volunteers, donors, Ambassador Board (A-Board), and the Board of Directors (BoD).

Over the next 3 years, our overall focus will be continuing to adjust to the many transitions we have experienced as a community and to reimagine our identity to continue to provide successful programming to our youth and families.

We will specifically focus our efforts on five main goals:

- Be proactive to ensure sustainability of Friends-Seattle
- Establish policies and processes that prioritize staff wellbeing and development
- Be an organization grounded in equity
- Center our programming around the voices of our youth and families
- Develop long-term financial stability

We are truly grateful for our incredible community that continues to support our mission.

### 2021-22 Strategic Planning Committee (SPC):

#### Facilitator - Jahmad Canley, Potential Unleashed

Tamara Corn (*Operations Manager*)

Samuel Gorman (*Program Manager, K-5*)

Hannah Handschin (*Professional Mentor, K-5*)

Bakari Hayes (*Alumnus*)

Venus Jones (*Caregiver*)

Justina Lee (*Ambassador Board Member*)

Matt Maloney (*Board of Directors Member*)

Edgar Masmela (*Sr. Director of Outreach & Engagement*)

Jerome Roache (*Board of Directors President*)

Sierra Wagner (*Development Manager*)

Lacie West (*Executive Director*)

*Approved by the Board of Directors on April 27, 2022*

---

## The Strategy Process

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and social unrest, Friends of the Children-Seattle (Friends-Seattle) re-evaluated the strategic goals in the 2020-2022 strategic plan. The focus shifted away from geographic expansion and program scale to deepening support around long-term services, ensuring youth connect to online education, preparing youth for college/career, combating systems of racism, and continuing to enroll youth.

In April 2021, Friends-Seattle started the process of creating a bridge/gap strategic plan informed by staff that prioritized goals to ensure the sustainability of our organization until a new Executive Director was hired to lead the next 3-year strategic planning process.

The questions posed to staff that developed the top organizational priorities included:

- How do we create generational change?
- What strategic issues program face?
- What holds us back from deepening our impact on general change?
- How do we improve program quality and reach our long-term goals?
- 12 months from now, what would we like to see different in program?
- What can we do better for our youth, families and community?
- Why are we doing this?
- Where are we now?
- How are we on our long-term goals?
- What is holding us back from success?
- What is our definition of success?
- Where do we want to be a year from now?

Based on the many conversations and compiling staff feedback, a voting system identified the top organizational priorities for the remainder of 2021. Those priorities included:

- **Safely re-open in-person mentoring and in-person office plan**
- **Maintain financial stability**
- **Continue to work toward becoming an anti-racist organization**
- **Prep our youth for career/post-secondary success** (*ex. getting youth ready for life after program with experience, career/college planning, job skills/training*)
- **Prioritize staff wellness** (*ex. team building and increased community amongst team, improved cross dept. communication, more staff appreciation*)

In late June, a new Executive Director was hired, and with the support of the newly formed leadership team, a strategic direction was established for the remainder of 2021 till mid-2022. The strategic direction was informed by the bridge/gap strategic plan with further insights from the Board of Directors and staff. The updated strategic goals communicated to our community included:

### **Safely reopen in-person mentoring and office space**

- Conducting continuous evaluation of our Covid-19 protocols with legal guidance and recommendations from the trusted health entities
- Securing the safety of our office space to ensure staff, youth, families and our community at large can return in-person by enhancing air purification, cleaning and sanitizing throughout office space

- Promoting & prioritizing constant communication with youth and families around Covid standard operating procedures and ensuring youth and mentors are at minimal risk for contracting Covid-19 during in-person activities

### **Prioritize staff wellness**

- Encouraging professional development and providing those opportunities through staff/Board committees, all-staff trainings, individualized coaching and external trainings
- Recognizing the mental health effects from Covid and heightened awareness of racial inequities and providing necessary supports to promote self-care
- Addressing how to best support staff with additional mental health resources and providing a flexible work environment
- Redefining our organizational culture, one that emphasizes inclusivity, collaboration, learning and transparency

### **Become an organization grounded in equity**

- Committing to ongoing learning around anti-racism
- Establishing our 2022-2025 strategic plan through an anti-oppressive lens with the support of staff and our external community stakeholders
- Revamping our staff structure to focus on building leadership skills, and prioritizing internal and external community building
- Encouraging a culture of mentorship throughout organization

### **Center our programming around the voices of our youth and families**

- Focusing on social emotional learning through a trauma informed lens
- Being intentional in our feedback from our youth and families
- Refining programming to include post-secondary success metrics and provide the necessary support to achieve outcomes
- Better connecting families within our community to address the most pressing needs

### **Ensure sustainability of our organization**

- Diversifying our funding pipeline to seek new opportunities for funding
- Deepening our relationships with our partners
- Growing our community-based partnerships to leverage resources and promote collective action
- Better utilizing technology to streamline communication and increase our visibility

Additionally, the strategic planning process for the 3-year strategic plan commenced in October 2022 with the selection of a facilitator to lead the process and establishing a strategic planning committee. Below is the complete timeline for the strategic planning process:

- **April 2021:** Staff engaged in a process to create a new strategic direction for organization
- **June 2021:** Bridge/Gap Strategic Plan approved and implemented
- **August 2022:** Facilitator hired to lead strategic planning process for new 3-year strategic plan
- **September 2021:** 2021-22 Strategic Direction developed and distributed to external stakeholders
- **October 2021:** SPC established and meeting scheduled confirmed (meetings held every other Monday until March and then meetings held every Monday)
- **October-November 2021:** Review past strategic plans and feedback from staff including the environmental assessment, values exercise notes from staff and Boards (A-Board & BoD)

- **November-December 2021:** Listening sessions with staff, Boards, donors, alumni, caregivers conducted
- **January 2022:** Staff and Boards trainings to develop common language, vision, and values
- **February 2022:** First quarterly community meeting to report progress of Strategic Direction goals
- **March 2022-April 2022:** Draft of 2022-25 strategic plan and strategic plan implementation matrix (SPIM) reviewed by staff and Boards
- **April 2022:** Presentation of final 2022-25 strategic plan and SPIM to BoD for approval

---

## Who We Are

### Mission

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

### Values

#### PUT CHILDREN FIRST



We intentionally serve youth who are facing the greatest obstacles. To help our youth discover their limitless potential, we foster their internal resiliency. We listen to our youth and base decisions on each youth's needs and dreams. We prioritize self-care so that we bring our best selves to our work and focus on our youth.

#### BUILD RELATIONSHIPS ON LOVE



We nurture long-term relationships from a foundation of love, acceptance and culturally informed practice. We don't give up easily and take a no matter what approach to our work. We commit for the long-term. We intentionally develop collaborative relationships over time with trust, empathy and healthy communication. We believe that we build community through one-on-one connections that are authentic, respectful and meaningful.

#### COMMIT TO EMPOWERMENT



We leverage personal strengths to take ownership of our futures. We build relationships within the communities of our youth and families to strengthen social networks and provide bridges to new opportunities. We consistently inspire possibility through empathy, hard work and fun. We model all of this for our youth, families and each other.

#### PURSUE GOALS RELENTLESSLY



We celebrate all achievements, big and small. We are disciplined in our commitment to goals, while innovative in how we reach them. We believe that the definition of success requires intentional reflection and adjustment over time. We work together and hold ourselves accountable with data to achieve short and long-term outcomes.

#### DEMAND EQUITY



We acknowledge the historical and present injustices impacting marginalized communities. We demand equity from ourselves and from our community. We insist that all people have the necessary support to achieve all of their hopes and dreams. We amplify the voices of our children, families and communities. We bring together different experiences, skills and backgrounds to provide opportunities to overcome personal, systemic and institutional barriers.

## Community Agreements

At Friends-Seattle, we operate by the following community agreements to foster a supportive culture throughout our chapter.

### | Create a space for people who feel like they may not belong somewhere |

We foster inclusive and open-minded dialogue by seeking to understand the differences we all hold.

### | Ensure everyone shines |

We always center the best interests of youth and will do whatever it takes to support their success. We recognize that it takes a village of people who have a common purpose and community agreements binding them together to carry out our mission. We ensure to celebrate the successes by showing appreciation to all stakeholders from our youth, caregivers, staff to our volunteers and donors.

### | Keep the channel of communication open |

We value communication, understanding we have many different channels at Friends—from Board to supervisors, supervisors to supervisees and mentors to youth. We will open these channels when need be, and know when to also keep those channels separate.

### | Speak up when needed and put our own oxygen masks on first |

We strive for balance, encouraging others to fill in where their strengths lie. We recognize there's always room for growth in the organization and the best place to start is within ourselves. We remain equitable by the highlighting and assessing of strengths of others and respecting individual boundaries.

### | The DNA of our work is creativity |

Our work is unique and so are our strategies. We are willing to try new things and willing to accept failure as a way to learn from experiences. We will continue to be open to change, take, re-evaluate, and adapt.

### | The foundation of our work is empathy |

Empathy allows us to build trust. With empathy, we can be more vulnerable and honest with ourselves and others, which allows us to build a stronger community.

### | Build relationships with honesty |

Relationship building is a huge part of our work. Honesty starts from building trust through transparent connections. We will have honest conversations and trust that our relationships will grow.

### | Invest time in building trust |

We recognize that building trust with individuals is different for everyone. We will work to not make assumptions. Trust leads to communication, respect and transparency.

### | Create spaces to flourish professionally and personally |

We maintain a growth mindset by creating these spaces. We can have difficult conversations that come from a caring place. Together, we will celebrate the small and big wins.

### | Everyone is doing their best |

We authentically speak our truths and will check intent versus impact when things don't land as we intended. We listen to what people have to say and try to understand where people are coming from. We will ask for clarity when there is confusion. We respond with care to everyone.

### | Show up and follow through |

We practice stewardship by being fully present, recognizing and caring about what needs to be done and by following through on our commitments to others.

## History & Milestones

In 2000, Friends-Seattle started with just 2 mentors and 8 youth. Currently, we provide services to over 200 youth ages 5-18 enrolled in over 94 different schools and living in 60 zip codes.

Since our inception, our milestones include:

**2009** – launched Women of influence event

**2010** – developed a lasting community partnership with Mercer Island Presbyterian Church to provide backpacks for back-to-school event

**2011** – formalized partnership with Seattle Public Schools school districts

**2012** – our first graduating class

**2015** – opened our doors in Rainier Valley and enrolled the 100th youth in our program

**2016** – entered partnership with Department of Child, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and the Why Not You Foundation

- formalized partnerships with other local school districts including Renton School District, Kent, Highline, Shoreline, and Auburn

- received Social Innovation Fund grant award and pledged to double the number of youth we serve

**2019** – formalized partnership with Childhaven

**2020** – pandemic pivot to provide technology to youth to participate in virtual learning, food bags and grocery gift cards to families.

## Our Impact

Friends-Seattle impacts generational change by helping youth who are facing the toughest systemic barriers in our community realize their power through relationships with salaried, professional mentors for 12+ years no matter what.

Friends-Seattle's long-term, consistent mentoring relationships help youth develop and achieve individual goals that lead to thriving futures. Our vision is that youth have the support they need to succeed and become advocates for themselves and their communities.

Our mentors, who are full-time, salaried staff, support youth in the following ways:

- Be prepared for post-secondary education and/or employment
- Develop positive goals for the future
- Develop a healthy lifestyle

Based upon research showing that a consistent relationship with a caring adult is the single most important factor in the success of a youth, our program works because we select youth who, while they have limitless potential, face challenges in the home, school environment and systemically. We start early when a youth is eager to learn and grow but needs the guidance of a professional mentor; and we stay for the long term, through high school completion.

---

## 2022-25 Organizational Goals and Strategies

### Goal: Be proactive to ensure sustainability of Friends-Seattle

#### Strategies:

- Conduct continuous evaluation of our Covid-19 protocols with legal guidance and recommendations from trusted health entities
- Constant communication with youth and families around Covid standard operating procedures
- Create policies and procedures for a safe environment for all staff, youth, families and volunteers
- Consistent evaluation of our hiring process (review current trends, revamp onboarding and offboarding, succession planning)
- Deepen our relationships with our formalized partners
- Grow our community-based partnerships to leverage resources and promote collective action
- Establish and implement compensation philosophy that encourages staff retention
- Increase the number of youth served at a sustainable pace
- Evaluate whether our physical space continues to meet the needs of our youth and other stakeholders today and looking forward

### Goal: Establish policies and processes that prioritize staff wellbeing and development

#### Strategies:

- Develop a new performance management system that prioritizes professional development and opportunities for cross team collaboration
- Execute all-staff trainings, engage in individualized coaching, and promote external trainings for leadership building
- Provide mental health resources and establish policies around self-care
- Maintain a flexible work environment
- Establish new organizational culture, one that emphasizes inclusivity, collaboration, learning and transparency

### Goal: Be an organization grounded in equity\*

#### Strategies:

- Commit to ongoing learning around anti-oppression
- Communicate our progress to goals to all stakeholders and include feedback from stakeholders
- Encourage a culture of mentorship throughout organization to promote shared leadership and career development
- Deepen relationships with all stakeholders to include more diverse perspectives in our decision-making process – sense of community
- Establish common language throughout the organization for clarity

### Goal: Center our programming around the voices of our youth and families

#### Strategies:

- Further prioritize social emotional learning through a trauma informed lens in all programming
- Intentionality around gathering feedback from programmatic stakeholders and implementation of feedback (program staff, youth, caregivers, programmatic partners, alumni)
- Refine programming to post-secondary success and family engagement (2Gen approach)
- Define and consistently share program metrics and outcomes
- Better connect program participants with our internal community (staff, youth, Boards, caregivers, alumni) to address the most pressing needs
- Improve program staffing structure that best supports program staff and needs of caregivers



## Goal: Develop long-term financial stability

### Strategies:

- Diversify our funding pipeline to seek new opportunities for funding
- Grow our donor base and volunteer base through revamped cultivation strategy that reflects the community we serve
- Increase multi-year gifts and monthly donors
- Better utilize technology to streamline communication, clarify donor relationships, and increase our visibility and social media presence
- Utilize the skills, expertise of our entire team to help reach fundraising goals

---

## Implementation Plan

### Strategies & Tactics

Based on the current stated strategies for each goal, tactics will be established by internal stakeholders in the Strategic Plan Implementation Matrix (SPIM). The list of tactics/activities supporting the strategies will be further reviewed and updated continually via the Strategic Plan Implementation Matrix (SPIM).

### Ongoing Planning

Friends-Seattle will identify champions for each goal and they with the support of the SPC will establish an ongoing planning process to engage key stakeholders. The process will include defining milestones, determining metrics to track progress, and establishing target dates using the SPIM. Each team department will also develop annual strategic action plans (SAP) to track progress to goals.

### Monitor, Measure and Communicate

The SPC will meet quarterly to check-in with champions and share progress with all internal and external stakeholders. This will include accessing impact and communicating achievements to sustain engagement and maintain the trust of stakeholders. The SPC will also communicate the progress towards the goals in this plan quarterly to internal stakeholders (Boards, staff, caregivers, youth, alumni).

\*Equity recognizes that everyone doesn't begin in the same place in society. Some people face adverse conditions and circumstances making it more challenging with the same effort to achieve the same goals. Equity advocates for those who may have been historically disadvantaged, making it difficult for them to be successful. What is "fair" as it relates to equity isn't a question of what is the same but rather the point from which a person begins. Equity takes into account historical and other factors in determining what is fair.

*(This definition is from Risetowin)*