



The Ingenuity Company

Strategy | Visioning | Design Thinking | Diagramming | Organizational Development

Strategic Planning Executive Summary

2024-2026 Organizational Strategic Plan

For Board Approval

21 May 2024



Mission

Helping Families Start Over

We support children and families who have escaped domestic violence situations and those suffering from some other form of trauma including natural disaster and criminal assault. We provide donated furniture and household goods as these families begin new, independent, productive lives in safe environments.

The FreeStore helps families in need to start over by providing furniture and household goods free-of-charge.

Vision / Purpose Statement

The FreeStore was started in 2001 to provide furniture to women leaving the domestic violence shelter in Des Moines. As the community learned of our mission, it responded generously and we were able to expand our services to referrals from all Iowa DV agencies and other Des Moines human services agencies, schools and churches. The first year, 2001, we gave furniture to 7 families. Now we serve over 500 families a year with over 430 tons of furniture. Items we can't use are passed to other agencies, whenever possible.

Through the efforts of volunteers, strong financial stewardship, the kindness and support of donors and a deep respect for our clients, the FreeStore seeks to have a positive impact on families in need.

Characteristics of the Organization

Through our process, we have identified the following words that best describe our organization:

Before: Engaged | Cautious | Proactive | Clear

After: Engaged | Collaborative | Impactful | Innovative

In aspiring to these characteristics, the FreeStore seeks to have a long-term positive impact for its community and those with whom they interact. The organization sets goals, objectives, and tactics that are representative of these words.

The FreeStore embodies the values exemplified by the characteristics of these descriptors. We self-identify as a mission-driven, proactive, and engaged organization.

Value Proposition

As we explored the different dynamics of our organization, we developed a value proposition outlining the major components of our what we have to offer those in our community and how we deliver services and support. As we work to better strengthen and clarify what we do, these are significant considerations that will ultimately help us more deeply consider what we do and how we function as an organization.

The FreeStore is for:

Who is
it for?

- Clients
- Volunteers
- Advocates
- Donors
- Partner Agencies
- Schools
- The Community
- The Environment

We provide support to those who seek:

Things Needed for Living:

- Household Goods
- Furniture
- Support
- Respect
- A Willingness to Improve Their Families Lives

Volunteers Seek:

- A Sense of Purpose
- A Variety of Experiences
- Meaningful Work
- Community and Camaraderie

Donors Seek:

- Fulfillment
- To Make a Difference
- Recycling vs. Disposing
- Being able to Make Use of Things / Gift Furniture That Have Meaning to New Owners
- Tax Benefits
- To Trust That Their Goods Will Be Used for their Intended Purpose

Advocates/Partner Agencies/Schools Seek:

- To Service Their Clients Well
- To Fill Gaps in Services
- A Consistent, Trusted Source for Client Needs



What do
they seek?

By working with community focus groups, collection of opinions and perspectives through survey work, we explored the motivations behind what not only draws individuals and families to the FreeStore, but how we could expand and extend what we do through better leveraging of resources, improvements to our service delivery system, and building upon what **we provide**:



We Provide

- Hands-on Experiences
- Transformational Volunteer Experiences
- Furniture and Household Goods
- Engagement and Fellowship for Volunteers
- One Stop Shop for Agencies
- Easy Low Stress Experiences for Clients
- Hope and Support for Families
- Partnership with Clients
- Strong Stewardship of Funds and Materials
- High Levels of Integrity
- Delivery Options Removes Barriers
- Recycling of Used Items, Keeping Them Out of Landfills

How are we different from others? What offerings make us distinct and help fill a gap or complement the existing services that exist in our community? How are we responsive to our community's needs? What sets us apart and helps those we serve understand the benefit of what we do and why we exist:

- We Are All Volunteers
- We Provide a Free Service to Clients
- We Do Not Compensate Volunteers / Have Paid Staff
- We Are Affordable for Agencies to Utilize
- We Provide One Place to Furnish Your First Next Place
- We Are Flexible
- We Are Financially Stable
- We Are Non-Judgmental
- We Are Caring



Those in the community increasingly look to us for their needs. All of these things contribute to answering the question of **why they can believe us:**

You can believe us because...



- We Have a Proven Track Record of Success Delivering Furniture and Household Goods to Families
- We Do What We Say We Will Do
- We Have Trend Lines of Positive Impact to People's Lives
- We Share Transformational Stories
- We Have a Strong Reputation
- Agencies Tell Our Stories and Share Good Experiences
- There is Growing Interest from Agencies
- We Have Strong Financial Support
- We Have Long Standing Volunteers
- We Have Data to Support These Claims
- We Have Growth in Number of Clients Served
- We Have A Core of Dedicated, Experienced, and Caring Volunteers

2024-2026 Strategic Focus Areas

Developed over the course of several months with the support and engagement of the volunteer board, the following is a high-level executive summary of the strategic plan. These objective areas represent support for the goals and strategies indicated for each of the key areas of the plan. The full plan contains tactical action steps, key performance indicators, and updates to the organizational vision to be reviewed in Quarter 1 as we move into implementation of the strategic plan in 2024.

Strategy Group 1: Diversify and Expand Volunteer Base, Strategic Partnerships, and Organizational Capacity

Internal and Organizational: • Expanded / New Base of Volunteers • Strong Succession Plan in Place to Ensure Organizational Sustainability • Partnerships Formed with Employers to Assist in the Steady Supply Chain of Volunteers	External and Programmatic: • Greater Capacity to Serve More People in Need • Wide Network of Community and Agency Support • More Ongoing Connectivity to Those We Serve Through Agencies
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Work Areas / Objective Grouping 1: Enhance Organizational Capacity

- Objective: Leverage Board Skills and External Network
- Objective: Work with Employers to Attract New Volunteers in Key Demographic Areas
- Objective: Provide for Succession Planning / Lower the Barrier to Participation for New Entrants
- Objective: Provide Continuous Tracking and Improvements to Services Provided

Work Areas / Objective Grouping 2: Align Volunteer Infrastructure with Needs

- Objective: Cultivate the Next Generation of Volunteers / Provide Onboarding Program
- Objective: Create Positive Momentum on Leveraging Organizational Successes
- Objective: Define Key Roles and Responsibilities for Volunteer Positions
- Objective: Formalize Committee Structure and Volunteer Leadership

Strategy Group 2: Maintain and Grow Organizational Infrastructure

Internal and Organizational: • Clear Direction on Facilities Needs • More Broad Use of Technology • Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities • Expand Focus on Environmental Impacts	External and Programmatic: • Thoughtful Presence of the FreeStore in a Broader Range of Geographic Area • Capital Improvement and Development Plan in Place • Sustainable Network / Supply Chain of Donated Goods
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Work Areas / Objective Grouping 3: Determine Direction on Future Infrastructure Needs

- Objective: Determine Future Space Needs and Location
- Objective: Determine Need for Expansion of the Organizational Footprint / Services
- Objective: Evaluate and Provide Additional Enhancements to Technology / Website
- Objective: Assess if Capital Campaign or Other Larger Scale Resource Development Effort is Indicated



Strategy Group 3: Enhance the Sustainability of the FreeStore

Internal and Organizational: • Developed, Engaged, and Ongoing Resource Development Plan • Ongoing and Growth in Securing a More Diverse Array of Funds from Cohen Foundation and Other Sources • Strong Internal Organizational Systems and Communication	External and Programmatic: • Strong and Diverse Donor Base • Developed and Engaged Marketing and Communications Plan • Clear External Understanding of the Organizational Mission
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Work Areas / Objective Grouping 4: **Raise Awareness of the FreeStore**

- Objective: Expand Our Network of Strategic Collaborators, Agencies, and Partners
- Objective: Be Present in Our Communities / Raise Awareness of the Organization / Provide More Group Engagement Activities
- Objective: Promote FreeStore Marketing, Public Relations, and Enhance Storytelling
- Objective: Focus on Strengths, Frequency, and Unique Purpose in Communication

Work Areas / Objective Grouping 5: **Diversify Revenue Streams**

- Objective: Determine Means of Maintaining Individual Donors / Reaching New Donors
- Objective: Develop and Implement Resource Development Strategies to Broaden Donor Base
- Objective: Secure CRM System for Better Donor Tracking
- Objective: Continue to Explore Cohen Foundation Grant Opportunities in Multiple Areas of Need