

A GREATER TOMORROW

2025-2029 Strategic Plan



GREATER CEDAR RAPIDS
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



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OUR PATH TO A GREATER TOMORROW



In 2024, the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation celebrated 75 years of serving Linn County. This milestone was a meaningful opportunity to reflect on our history, honor our accomplishments, and engage with the community. It was also the final year of our five-year strategic plan—it was time to consider the next chapter of our work.

Fortunately, celebrating the past and preparing for the future often go hand in hand. Our anniversary celebrations opened new ways for connecting with people, enabling us to hear from more of our community and in new ways.

So, for the first half of the year, we listened. We collected surveys from donors, fund holders, nonprofit professionals, grant writers, and even people who had never interacted with us before. We also conducted focus groups with nonprofit leaders and donors to deepen our understanding of how we can better support their efforts.

The feedback affirmed something we’ve always known: Linn County is home to generous people who are committed to shaping a brighter future. Our conversations also highlighted the challenges our community faces and ways the Community Foundation can be involved as a partner in addressing them.

Guided by this input, we developed a strategic plan that will steer our work over the next five years. Titled *A Greater Tomorrow*, the plan provides direction and ambitious goals with the flexibility to adapt and be responsive to the community’s evolving needs. These actionable steps position us for another 75 years of building partnerships and serving Linn County.

Karla

Karla Twedt-Ball
President & CEO

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GUIDED BY OUR VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

Our vision, mission, and values provide the foundation and direction for achieving the Community Foundation's strategic goals.

VISION

A vibrant and inclusive Linn County where all people thrive.

MISSION

To strengthen our community through philanthropy.

VALUES

- **Equity & Inclusion** - We believe the success of our community can only be achieved when everyone has the opportunity to experience their full potential.
- **Collaboration** - We seek to build relationships and engage the community in our work.
- **Learning** - We use our resources to increase understanding of the issues that require community action.
- **Integrity** - As stewards of community resources, we operate ethically and demonstrate transparency and accessibility.
- **Innovation** - In order to respond to changing needs, opportunities and challenges, we remain flexible and open to creative strategies.

LISTENING TO LEARN

Creating a Community Foundation that works for everyone requires input from everyone. In 2024, we set out to learn from donors, nonprofits, fund holders, other stakeholders, and even community members unfamiliar with our work. Through five unique surveys and three focus groups, we gathered insights into the challenges and opportunities shaping our community. We also learned what we're doing well, where we can improve, and how we can continue to be trusted partners for philanthropists and the local nonprofit sector.



WHAT WE HEARD

- Demand for nonprofit services has increased significantly in the last five years, and the trend is expected to continue.
- Community Foundation donors and fund holders prioritize giving to organizations across all nonprofit sectors.
- Community members say Linn County's top three strengths are disaster resilience, an ability to foster a vibrant arts and culture scene, and its safe, welcoming and inclusive sense of community.
- Professional advisors cite integrity and trustworthiness as top reasons for referring clients to the Community Foundation.

IMAGINE A LINN COUNTY WHERE EVERYONE THRIVES

BROADENING OUR REACH

As an endowed foundation, we are dedicated to the long-term success of our community. This strategic plan aligns our efforts with the future vision of Linn County. While we remain steadfast in awarding grants, supporting donors, and engaging with and convening the community, this plan emphasizes deepening our impact. Our approach will integrate the following priorities across all focus areas and aspects of our work:

Advancing Racial Equity

As Linn County becomes increasingly diverse, we are committed to fostering an equitable and inclusive future. Our vision is a community where everyone can thrive, with advancing racial equity at the core of our efforts. We will engage more intentionally with people of color, ensuring that our work represents and strengthens the entire community.

Engaging Rural Communities

We are also dedicated to geographic diversity and will focus on strengthening connections with rural communities. By actively collaborating with donors, nonprofits, and community groups in these areas, we aim to build resources that address their unique needs to help strengthen their communities.

WHAT THE NUMBERS SHOW

- Average household income in Linn County is **\$68,710**, but is **\$92,670** for White-alone households and **\$51,643** for Black-alone households.*
- Between **2000** and **2020**, the Cedar Rapids metro area grew by more than **23%**, while four of the 13 nonmetro communities saw population decreases.*

**U.S. Census Bureau*

STRENGTHENING LINN COUNTY TOGETHER

Our strategic plan centers on four key focus areas to guide our work. Each area reflects our commitment to a vibrant, inclusive Linn County where all people thrive. The focus areas align our goals with community needs and priorities, ensuring our efforts continue to strengthen Linn County through philanthropy.

Four Focus Areas to Guide Our Work



GREATER FUTURE

Elevate and invest in efforts that prepare our community for a strong future.



GREATER PRESENCE

Expand relationships, awareness, visibility, and partnerships that support the entire community.



GREATER IMPACT

Grow our impact by helping donors, nonprofits, and community partners strengthen our community through philanthropy.



GREATER FOUNDATION

Enhance the Community Foundation's operations to better serve the community now and for generations to come.

Greater FUTURE

We will elevate and invest in efforts that prepare Linn County for a strong future.

OUR PATH FORWARD: ACTION STEPS

Convene leaders, catalyze action, and fund future-focused community priorities

- Participate, convene, and support community partnerships and conversations
- Pursue external grant opportunities for community efforts
- Maximize use of Community Investment Fund

Implement local impact investing

- Develop an investment strategy that generates positive social and environmental outcomes alongside financial returns, ensuring that investments contribute meaningfully to community well-being and sustainability.

Build awareness of community priorities and needs

- Implement community-focused narrative in communications
- Engage a community-centric fundraising approach
- Plan learning opportunities to engage key stakeholders

WHAT WE HEARD

- 78% of local nonprofits worry that demand for services will further exceed their capacities over the next five years.
- “I believe the demand on our staff will increase exponentially.”
– Survey response from a nonprofit leader
- Respondents ranked access to affordable housing and economic opportunity for all as the area’s two most significant challenges.

Greater PRESENCE

We will expand relationships, awareness, visibility, and partnerships that support all of Linn County.

OUR PATH FORWARD: ACTION STEPS

Increase community awareness and knowledge of our organization

- Create communication and outreach strategies to enhance public understanding of the Community Foundation

Increase engagement with donors, professional advisors, nonprofits, community partners, and rural communities

- Expand outreach with each audience

WHAT WE HEARD

- 92% of nonprofits believe that the Community Foundation understands Linn County well.
- Donors and fund holders ranked integrity, quality of staff, and knowledge of local nonprofits as the top three reasons for partnering with the Community Foundation.
- 85% of fund holders said that Community Foundation has a positive impact on the community.
- Respondents ranked disaster resilience and the region’s ability to foster vibrant arts and culture as the area’s two most notable strengths.

Greater IMPACT

We will grow our impact by helping donors, nonprofits, and community partners strengthen Linn County through philanthropy.

OUR PATH FORWARD: ACTION STEPS

Secure new contributions and planned gifts

- Identify and cultivate potential donors
- Provide donors with exceptional philanthropic service
- Grow the unrestricted Greater Good Funds to help address emerging needs and opportunities as they arise.

Enhance, streamline, and increase our support of nonprofit organizations and the sector

- Further align grantmaking to maximize impact while ensuring equity and responsiveness to community needs.
- Leverage investments in local nonprofits to strengthen their capacity and contribute to the overall growth and sustainability of the sector.

Expand learning opportunities

- Promote equity-based learning opportunities
- Systematize and prioritize focus areas and learning strategies

Greater FOUNDATION

We will continue to enhance our operations to better serve the community now and for generations to come.

OUR PATH FORWARD: ACTION STEPS

Grow organizational learning, culture, and collaboration

- Support staff and Board opportunities to enhance community-based work
- Support workplace belonging and organizational mission

Attend to operations and efficiency as we grow

- Identify and implement plan to grow operating resources
- Leverage technology to support, streamline, and safeguard operations



WHAT WE HEARD

- 85% of donors and fund holders say their charitable legacy is an important factor in giving decisions.
- 67% of donors and fund holders plan to give through the Community Foundation in the next 5-10 years.
- 78% of nonprofits report lingering effects of the pandemic and derecho are having a moderate or significant impact on their organization.
- 87% of nonprofits say demand for services currently exceeds capacity.
- 88% of nonprofits say Community Foundation learning opportunities help them achieve their mission.



WHAT WE HEARD

- “The Community Foundation is a great place to work – it enables and empowers us to use resources to expand our learning to be better citizens of the community.” – Survey respondent
- The top three areas for improvement identified by staff include efficiency in internal processes, cross-team collaboration, and Board engagement.
- 95% of fund holders and 94% of nonprofits with endowments at the Community Foundation are satisfied or very satisfied with the foundation’s integrity and trustworthiness.

EXPANDING OUR IMPACT

In our commitment to deepening our community impact, we have set two ambitious goals:

INCREASE THE GREATER GOOD FUNDS

We aim to grow our unrestricted Greater Good Funds from \$45 million to over \$50 million. This expansion will enhance our capacity to support a broader range of community initiatives, ensuring that we can address emerging needs and opportunities as they arise.

EXPAND ANNUAL COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Our goal is to elevate our annual community investment to \$20 million. This includes a comprehensive approach encompassing grantmaking, impact investments, and collaborative funding initiatives. By diversifying our strategies, we seek to maximize positive outcomes for our community.

Achieving these goals will require a concerted effort to engage with donors, partners, and community members, fostering a culture of collaboration that drives meaningful change.

THANK YOU



Thank you to the Community Foundation staff and Board of Directors for their thoughtful engagement in shaping *A Greater Tomorrow*.

We also extend our gratitude to the hundreds of community members who participated in surveys and focus groups— your insights were invaluable to this plan.

Together, we are strengthening Linn County.



GREATER CEDAR RAPIDS
**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

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