

Make More *good* Possible



**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**
OF NORTHEAST IOWA

here for good

Strategic Plan
2025-2028

Here for Good

Today, Tomorrow, Forever

At the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa, we're driven by a core purpose: to connect generosity to impact. We work every day to help generous people support the causes and communities they care about most, across our entire 20-county region.

With over 900 charitable funds, more than \$169 million in assets, and annual grants totaling more than \$9 million, we're proud to be a trusted partner for donors, nonprofits, and local leaders. But numbers only tell part of the story. Since 1956, the heart of everything we do has been our commitment to people and the places they call home.

A Plan Built Together

To guide the development of a new strategic plan that would align our values, elevate local voices, and chart a clear course for future impact, the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa engaged Paul Thelen, director of the Larned A. Waterman Nonprofit Resource Center at the University of Iowa. The process, led by Thelen and CFNEIA's strategic plan taskforce, included learning opportunities, data analysis, visioning, and the final development of a strategy to lead us into the future.

The Process

Listening & Learning

In 2024, we invited over 1,600 individuals from across our 20 counties, including donors, nonprofit leaders, volunteers, and community members, to share their insights through a regional survey. Over 500 responses helped shape our strategic plan, giving us a deeper understanding of local priorities, how the Community Foundation can be a better partner, and how we can all work better together.

Visioning

After conducting data analysis and internal reflection, the University of Iowa's Larned A. Waterman Nonprofit Resource Center facilitated multiple sessions with board, staff, and committee volunteers to help refine the foundation's values, role, and impact.

Plan Development

The information from visioning informed the further development of the final strategic goals and outcomes. This version of the plan creation was led by the CFNEIA leadership team with ongoing input from staff and board members.

Make More Possible

The result is a strategic plan that reflects the voices of the people we serve and the values we live by. It reinforces the importance of local decisions leading to local impact, and centers collaboration as a way to bring people and communities together around shared goals. The plan aligns our values, actions, and outcomes, providing a clear path forward for how we lead, connect, and support lasting change.

It also gives our donors, nonprofit partners, and volunteers greater clarity and confidence in how their efforts contribute to something larger—a mission to inspire people and connect resources to enrich our communities.

It's a plan that brings us all together to make more possible.



Our Mission

To inspire people and connect resources to enrich our communities.



Our Vision

A vibrant region of thriving people.



Our Values



Collaboration
is essential.



Equity
is foundational.



Leadership
is a responsibility.



Trust
is earned.

At the heart of our work are the values of collaboration, equity, leadership, and trust. These principles guide every decision we make and every partnership we build. These values shape our approach and drive meaningful, lasting impact for the communities we serve.

Collaboration

We believe the most innovative ideas for addressing a community's challenges come from within the community.

We will develop deep connections with the communities we serve to create impacts leading to transformational change.

Leadership

We believe we must boldly take the lead on important community issues.

We will ensure the resources entrusted to us support changemaking organizations and that we champion ideas and actions making our communities better for all people.

Equity

We believe everyone must have an equitable opportunity to thrive.

We will advance equity by fostering welcoming communities, dismantling social and economic barriers to success, and working to ensure everyone in our region has access to opportunity and quality of life.

Trust

We believe we have a responsibility to address the power dynamics and inequities present in philanthropy.

We will earn the trust of our community by taking actions rooted in authentic listening, clear communication, fiscal integrity and sustainability, and a commitment to transparency.

Our Impact Priorities

A Clearer Path. A Stronger Impact. A Shared Vision.

Our impact priorities unite grantmaking and community leadership to amplify the power of relationships, open doors to opportunities, and empower lasting change. We're more than a funding source. We connect donors, nonprofits, and community leaders to resources, expertise, and one another. Together, we're shaping a vibrant region of thriving people.



Why We Evolved Our Priorities

- 🔗 **Clarify our impact** – Create a clearer story for donors, nonprofits, and community members.
- 🔗 **Simplify and focus** – Provide a framework that's both accessible and strategic.
- 🔗 **Support what's already working** – Reflect the strengths of our current work along with our vision for the future.
- 🔗 **Align with our values** – Ensure actions follow our values of collaboration, equity, leadership, and trust.
- 🔗 **Empower our local community foundations** – Guide grantmaking and leadership that meets unique local needs.

Keep reading to find more detailed information on each of our impact priorities.

Opportunity & Access



Everyone deserves the chance to reach their potential. We partner with organizations and actively work to remove barriers and expand pathways to opportunity so all people, especially those in underserved and rural areas, can access the resources and support needed for economic prosperity and upward mobility.

- **Workforce Readiness:** Collaborations with nonprofit and for-profit sectors to prepare a diverse and qualified workforce and create economic mobility for individuals, especially in under-resourced communities.
- **Equity Initiatives:** Programs and organizations making communities more welcoming for all people, including immigrant and refugee communities, people with disabilities, and other minoritized populations.
- **Financial Empowerment:** Programs that offer financial literacy education and resources to promote economic prosperity.

Health & Safety



Every person has the right to live in a safe, stable, and healthy environment. We work with organizations providing essential health and human services – from emergency response and shelter to mental health support and food security. Investing in efforts that protect well-being and promote stability helps people lead healthier, safer lives.

- **Basic Needs:** Programs and projects providing access to necessary human needs, such as food security and safe shelter.
- **Emergency Response:** Public safety services that offer immediate assistance during emergencies, including fire, law enforcement, and emergency medical services.
- **Health Programs:** Initiatives that focus on expanding access to healthcare and preventative services that support mental and physical well-being.

Vibrant Communities



Vibrant communities are places where people want to live, work, and play. We connect and collaborate with people and organizations bringing neighborhoods to life through arts, culture, recreation, and economic development. By enhancing quality of life and fostering a sense of belonging, communities attract residents, businesses, and visitors.

- **Arts and Culture:** Support for cultural, visual, and performing arts experiences that enrich community life.
- **Quality of Life:** Projects strengthening communities through public space enhancement, recreational opportunities, and community safety.
- **Economic Development:** Initiatives that stimulate local economies, support small businesses, and create job opportunities.

Youth Empowerment



Young people are the future leaders and changemakers of our region. We support programs that provide educational opportunities, leadership development, and mentorship, helping youth gain the skills, confidence, and connections to thrive and lead in their communities.

- **Scholarships:** Investing in youth pursuing higher education through scholarships.
- **Educational Excellence:** Institutions and programs that provide quality education from preschool through college.
- **Mentorship and Skill Development:** Organizations and initiatives offering mentorship programs and skill-building activities for youth.
- **Childcare Services:** Efforts to increase equitable, accessible, and sustainable childcare opportunities.

Our Strategic Goals

The goals and key outcomes outlined in this plan are designed to move us from intention to action. They provide a clear framework to guide how we lead in our communities, deepen our relationships, grow charitable resources, and strengthen our internal capacity. Collectively, these strategic goals focus our efforts, support lasting impact, and ensure we remain a responsive, values-driven foundation working to build a vibrant region of thriving people.



Community Leadership

Goal

CFNEIA will develop deep connections with the communities we serve to create impacts leading to transformational change. We will serve as a convener and leader in building a stronger region by amplifying its diverse voices.

Key Outcomes

- Align the ways we carry out community leadership and collaboration with our impact priorities.
- Collaborate with local community foundation volunteers to grow community outreach, address community needs, and grow assets.
- Develop communications strategies to ensure all audiences have clarity on our impact priorities model.
- Strengthen nonprofits' capacity beyond grantmaking.



Transformational Grantmaking

Goal

CFNEIA will be a transparent, trust-based funder that utilizes grantmaking to support our core impact priorities and make meaningful impacts to further our vision of a vibrant region of thriving people.

Key Outcomes

- Strengthen practices and implementation of Trust-Based Philanthropy* grantmaking.
- Uplift impact priority model in all grantmaking.
- Strengthen our scholarship program to connect to students with greatest barriers and need.
- Evaluate funding programs and seek enhancements for growth and impact.

**The trust-based philanthropy movement is fundamentally reimagining the role funders can have in building a more just and equitable society. This movement is creating a sector in which there is mutual accountability between funders and nonprofits, and where philanthropic systems and structures reflect the needs and dreams of communities.*

Our Strategic Goals



Growing Assets for Impact

Goal

CFNEIA will increase our community impact by growing and preserving charitable assets in traditional and innovative ways that help donors and fundholders achieve their goals and create responsive, proactive funding.

Key Outcomes

- Grow current and secure new assets to enable us to be proactive and innovative in our support of our Impact Priorities.
- Strengthen the financial model of nonprofit organizations by establishing and cultivating endowment funds.
- Cultivate and strengthen relationships with existing and prospective stakeholder groups.
- Capture generational wealth transfer to ensure regional charitable growth.



Strengthening Organizational Capacity

Goal

CFNEIA will demonstrate organizational excellence and continuous improvements to strengthen our services and culture, and inspire our community through authentic listening, clear communication, fiscal integrity and sustainability.

Key Outcomes

- Ensure staff capacity and learning is aligned to strengthen our engagement and outcomes around our impact priorities.
- Develop dashboards and data collections to measure goal achievement, grant impacts, and overall mission growth.
- Develop and execute marketing strategies to increase the frequency of communications and provide clarity about the Community Foundation, our work, and our outcomes.
- Lead as an organization that prioritizes relationship-building and trust with stakeholders.
- Carry out continuous organizational improvement and maintain fiscal integrity.

Together, We Make More Possible

The 2025–2028 Strategic Plan is a reflection of who we are, what we value, and where we’re headed—together. Grounded in the voices of our communities and guided by our mission to *inspire people and connect resources to enrich our communities*, this plan charts a clear path forward. It strengthens our commitment to local decision-making, deepens our partnerships with donors and nonprofits, and aligns our actions with the lasting impact we strive to create. We do more than fund great ideas – we help bring them to life.

Powered by People

One of our greatest strengths is the more than 200 dedicated volunteers who guide local grantmaking decisions in the communities where they live. Their insights ensure that every dollar entrusted to us goes toward meeting local needs. This shared leadership model keeps our work grounded, responsive, and community-led.

Committed To You

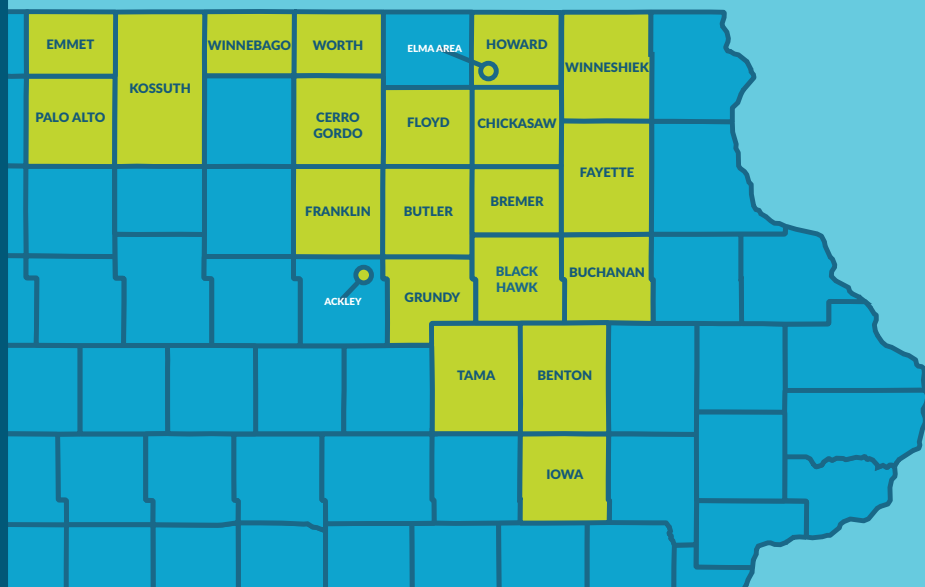
- **Nonprofits:** Through funding and support that champions your vital work.
- **Donors:** By helping you make meaningful, lasting gifts that reflect your values.
- **Professional Advisors:** By supporting you as you assist clients through their charitable giving journey.
- **Communities:** Through collaboration, convening, and leading when needed to address community needs and explore opportunities.

Thank You

Our mission is only possible because of the generosity, passion, and partnership of people like you. Whether you’re a donor, a nonprofit partner, or a volunteer, we are deeply grateful for the trust you place in us.

With clarity, purpose, and collaboration at the core, we’re building a stronger, more connected region—where generosity fuels opportunity, and every person has a chance to thrive.

Thank you for being part of this journey and for making more possible.





cfneia.org
319-287-9106



CFNS

ACCREDITED FOUNDATION Confirmed in compliance with National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations.

10/6/25



Visit our website.