

STRATEGIC PLAN FY 2025-2028

FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 2025 - JUNE 2028



FAMILIES FORWARD
C H A R L O T T E

VISION

WE EMPOWER CHARLOTTE-AREA FAMILIES TO OVERCOME INTERGENERATIONAL POVERTY



MISSION

To partner with families experiencing poverty to achieve lasting economic stability. We provide educational opportunities, offer essential support, and foster long-term relationships through individualized mentoring.

Families Forward Charlotte supports families experiencing poverty by providing individualized mentoring, essential resources, and educational opportunities that promote long-term stability and self-sufficiency. Through our Family Success Program, families partner with trained volunteer mentors and professional staff to set and achieve goals related to financial literacy, employment, housing, and education—key areas that impact a family’s ability to thrive. Our Alumni Program ensures participants have the support they need for continued success after their two years of the Family Success Program end. And, our Weekend Food Pack program provides essential support to families across our city so that every child can thrive.

At our core, we believe that empowering parents directly improves the well-being and future outcomes of their children. Our work is a belief in the power of relationships and community support to drive meaningful, lasting change. Families Forward Charlotte not only meets immediate needs but also invests in long-term growth through personalized mentorship and resource navigation that build financial empowerment, resilience, and self-advocacy.

In 2024-25, 89% of families graduating from our program made measurable progress toward their financial goals, demonstrating the impact of our holistic, relationship-based model. By addressing the root causes of poverty and equipping families with tools to build a stronger future, we support equitable pathways to success and help strengthen the fabric of our community.

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Our Statement of Belief: Foundations for 2025-28

We believe in the inherent potential of every Charlotte-area family to achieve lasting economic stability and overcome the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Our foundation is built upon a deep commitment to our community, where we actively partner with families experiencing poverty to empower them on their journey. We believe in the power of connection and collaboration, **COMMUNITY**, working together to achieve our shared vision.

Central to our beliefs is the principle of **RESPECT** for each family we serve. We honor their unique circumstances and believe in their capacity to make profound, long-term changes in their lives. This conviction necessitates an approach that recognizes and values the diverse experiences and perspectives within our community, ensuring equitable access to opportunities and support.

We are guided by **INTEGRITY**, committed to open and accountable practices that foster trust in our relationships with both clients and donors. We believe in providing not just essential support, but also vital educational opportunities that equip parents and caregivers with the life skills necessary for long-term success.

To truly empower families, we embrace innovation in our programs and services, constantly seeking new and effective ways to help adults break through mental and financial barriers. We believe in the power of connection and actively work to connect families to resources that can further support their progress towards financial stability for all.

Ultimately, our belief system is rooted in the conviction that through collaborative partnerships, unwavering respect for individual journeys, and innovative solutions, we can propel Charlotte-area families to build brighter futures and break the cycle of poverty, one relationship at a time.

A LOOK AHEAD

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Community Partners,

I'm thrilled to share a glimpse into the exciting future of Families Forward Charlotte, guided by our newly approved strategic plan! This comprehensive roadmap, shaped by the invaluable input of our staff, volunteers, board members, community partners, and especially our Family Partners, sets ambitious yet achievable goals for the next three years.

Our strategic planning journey began in September, a truly collaborative effort that involved SWOT analyses, dedicated Planning Committee sessions, and crucial feedback from three distinct focus groups including our Family Liaisons and both current and alumni Family Partners. This thorough process allowed us to not only refine our vision but also to solidify the pathways to achieving it.

This plan will focus our efforts across four key priorities:

Our Key Priorities

- **Leadership and Capacity:** We're investing in our organizational effectiveness and sustainability, ensuring we have the strong leadership, trained staff, and efficient operations to thrive for years to come.
- **Volunteer Management:** Our volunteers are the heart of FFC, and we're committed to strengthening their engagement through robust recruitment, excellent support, and meaningful opportunities that foster long-term commitment.
- **Supportive Services:** We're expanding access to vital supportive services, including mental health care, housing assistance, and workforce development, to truly enhance our existing programs and holistically address the needs of the families we serve.
- **Annual Engagement:** We've set clear targets for our annual service delivery and engagement across all our core programs, ensuring we continue to make a significant impact in the community.

I am incredibly enthusiastic about the path ahead. With this strategic plan as our compass, I am confident that Families Forward Charlotte will continue to empower families, foster lasting relationships, and create profound, positive change in our community. We look forward to achieving these ambitious goals with your continued partnership and support.

Telitha Hight

Telitha Hight
FFC Board Chair



STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

All Board and Staff Members, as well as other key stakeholders, participated in the Strategic Planning process.

BOARD MEMBERS

Telitha Hight, Chair*
David Privitera, Vice Chair*
Nadine Morgan, Secretary*
Jason Reinfried, Treasurer
Carrie Graham, Committee Chair*
Jack Lange, At-Large
Niki Koesel, At-Large
Phil Toupin, At-Large
Elaine Brown, At-Large
Peggy Lipps, At-Large
Jaime Perez, At-Large

STAFF

Carrie Christian, Executive Director*
Tatiyana Laws, Director of Programming*
Taylor Justice, Director of Advancement
Daniel Bentley, Program Manager
Shelby Lewis, Program Manager

* Strategic Plan Committee Member



INTRODUCTION

As Families Forward Charlotte continues its vital work, we are proud to unveil our new strategic plan, designed to serve as a comprehensive roadmap for the next three years. This plan will guide our priorities and actions, ensuring they remain deeply aligned with FFC's evolving mission, vision, and values.

The development of this strategic plan was a truly collaborative endeavor, drawing upon the diverse perspectives and invaluable insights of our staff, dedicated volunteers, board members, community partners, and most importantly, our Family Partners. The process began with a thorough SWOT Survey, followed by focused sessions with our Planning Committee to identify key priorities. These priorities were then reviewed and affirmed by our Board

Due to the importance of the Strategic Planning process, FFC engaged a consultant, Matt Sharp from Sharp Advising, to lead it through planning over the course of six months. We are grateful for his expertise and dedication to our success.

Crucially, we engaged directly with our community through three distinct focus groups involving Family Liaisons (volunteer mentors), current Family Partners (program participants), and Program Alumni, ensuring that the voices of those we serve were at the heart of our planning. Subsequent committee and executive meetings refined our goals and objectives, culminating in the Board's final approval.

This rigorous and inclusive process has yielded a robust plan that not only builds upon our past successes but also thoughtfully expands our reach and impact. The following document outlines our key priorities, guiding principles, and specific goals and objectives that will propel Families Forward Charlotte forward through 2028.



"The opportunity for all stakeholders to contribute and enrich our 2025-2028 strategic plan was monumental."

- Dr. Carrie Graham,
Board Member and
Strategic Planning
Committee Chair

OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The process adopted by the FFC Strategic Planning Committee in the development of a three-year Strategic Plan for implementation from FY 2025-2028 included nine key phases.



FOCUS GROUP SUMMARIES

Focus Group 1 - Family Partners

Current Family Partners (program participants) of our Family Success Program were identified and invited to participate in surveys and an in-person feedback session led by Sharp Advising. These participants were gathered to specifically inform strategic planning around the key priority of additional supportive services FFC could provide.

Current families view FFC positively, emphasizing the crucial support, encouragement, and "village" atmosphere it provides. Their insights highlight a strong foundation for supportive services and identified key areas for enhancement and expansion aligned with the strategic priority.

Participation: 7 individuals attended in-person session, 4 individuals completed surveys

Focus Group 2 - Program Alumni

Family Success Program graduates were identified and invited to participate in surveys and an in-person feedback session led by Sharp Advising. These past participants were gathered to provide valuable perspectives on participant experiences with supportive services.

The feedback underscores the program's positive impact while highlighting opportunities to refine and expand services in line with this priority of enhancing supportive services offered.

Participation: 8 individuals attended in-person session, 4 individuals completed surveys

Focus Group 3 - Family Liaisons

Family Liaisons, volunteer mentors for our Family Success Program, were identified and invited to participate in surveys and a virtual feedback session led by Sharp Advising. These volunteers were gathered to inform strategic planning for the Volunteer Management key priority.

Family Liaisons are vital to FFC's mission, drawn by the desire for meaningful local impact and connection. Their insights highlight the rewarding nature of the role while identifying key areas for enhancing volunteer support, training, and engagement.

Participation: 4 individuals attended virtual session, 7 individuals completed surveys

OVERVIEW OF THE FY 2025-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

A. Terminology

To ensure a shared understanding of the strategic plan, the following key terms are defined.

Key Priorities

The organization's broad focus areas for the next three years.

Guiding Principles:

The core philosophies that will guide the implementation of the strategic plan.

Goals:

Broad statements defining what the organization aims to achieve in each priority area over three years.

Objectives:

Specific, measurable steps to achieve the goals, typically within one year.

B. Key Priorities

Families Forward Charlotte has identified four key priorities to focus its efforts:

- **Leadership and Capacity:** Ensure organizational effectiveness and sustainability by investing in strong leadership, staff training and development, and efficient operations to ensure the organization's long-term success.
- **Volunteer Management:** Strengthen volunteer engagement by attracting diverse and committed talent, providing excellent support and off-boarding processes, and fostering meaningful engagement.
- **Supportive Services:** Expand access to vital supportive services, including mental health care, housing assistance, and workforce development, to enhance the existing program and holistically address family needs.
- **Annual Engagement:** Achieve defined annual service delivery and engagement targets across core programs to ensure significant community reach and impact.

C. Guiding Principles for Implementation

To ensure long-term success and impact, Families Forward Charlotte commits to embedding the principles of **ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS** and **PROGRAM ALIGNMENT** throughout the implementation of this strategic plan.

All goals and objectives will be approached by:

- Continually assessing and optimizing infrastructure, systems, and core processes.
- Strategically evaluating and designing programs and core initiatives by effectively utilizing data and participant feedback while continually refining analysis methods and data-informed decision-making.
- Ensuring resource allocation, including staffing and partnerships, supports overall effectiveness and strategic goals.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

To organize and focus the FFC organization on achieving its future mission, the committee conducted an exercise to define specific goals and objectives to achieve by 2028.

This will act as forward-thinking guideposts Families Forward Charlotte Board and Staff can use to navigate and assess progress.

A detailed breakdown of Strategic Priorities by year, including action steps, due dates, and KPIs was developed for internal guidance. This may be made available upon request.



LEADERSHIP & CAPACITY

Ensure organizational effectiveness and sustainability by investing in strong leadership, staff training and development, and efficient operations to ensure the organization's long-term success.

Talent Development & Management

Goal:

Cultivate and retain organizational talent by investing in comprehensive professional development, leadership training, and strategic succession planning for key roles.

Objectives:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive professional development program for all staff, informed by ongoing needs assessments.
- Provide targeted leadership training and support to enhance director-level effectiveness.
- Establish and promote career mapping for internal talent development and succession planning.

Board Effectiveness & Governance

Goal:

Enhance board performance and strategic oversight through robust governance structures, clear procedures, effective onboarding/offboarding, and forward-thinking succession planning.

Objectives:

- Develop and implement comprehensive plans and documented procedures for board succession, leadership roles, and committee functions.
- Establish and execute standardized, effective onboarding and offboarding processes for board members, incorporating satisfaction measurement.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Strengthen volunteer engagement by attracting diverse and committed talent, providing excellent support and off-boarding processes, and fostering meaningful engagement.

Volunteer Development & Retention

Goal:

Equip volunteers for success and foster their ongoing commitment through robust recruitment, training, support, recognition, and feedback processes.

Objectives:

- Implement integrated strategies for volunteer recruitment, comprehensive training, and ongoing development to attract and effectively equip volunteers, especially for key roles like Family Liaisons.
- Develop and maintain accessible resources, including standardized role/journey plans and a partner directory, to support volunteer effectiveness.
- Establish and maintain systematic approaches for volunteer recognition, appreciation, and feedback collection (including satisfaction and off-boarding surveys) to cultivate commitment and guide retention efforts.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Expand access to vital supportive services, including mental health care, housing assistance, and workforce development, to enhance the existing program and holistically address family needs.

Enhancing Mental Health Services

Goal:

Improve participant well-being by increasing access to quality mental health care, providing relevant education, and strategically evaluating Families Forward Charlotte's role in service delivery.

Objectives:

- Establish and maintain effective partnerships and referral processes to increase participant access to qualified mental health providers.
- Develop, deliver, and evaluate relevant mental health education and stress management programming for participants.

Strengthening Housing Assistance

Goal:

Increase housing stability for participants through enhanced resource navigation, expanded partnerships, advocacy, and exploration of diverse housing solutions.

Objectives:

- Enhance internal capacity (staffing, training, resources) to effectively support participants navigating housing challenges.
- Collaborate with strategic partners to identify, explore, and expand access to diverse housing solutions and supportive resources for participants.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES, CON'T

Expanding Workforce Development

Goal:

Promote economic mobility by increasing access to impactful workforce development opportunities, facilitating connections to higher-wage jobs, and ensuring program sustainability and scalability.

Objectives

- Implement and manage participation in collaborative workforce development initiatives (like Pathways 2 Prosperity CLT), providing comprehensive participant support (wraparound services, coaching, employer connections).
- Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of workforce development initiatives to inform program improvements, model documentation, and long-term sustainability planning.



ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT

Achieve defined annual service delivery and engagement targets across core programs to ensure significant community reach and impact.

Annual Engagement Targets

Goal:

Achieve defined annual engagement and service level targets across Families Forward Charlotte's core program areas.

Objectives

- **Family Success Program:** Meet annual Family Success Program enrollment/service targets (Capacity goal: 30-35 families/Program Manager/cohort).
- **Alumni Program:** Achieve annual engagement targets (Goal: 40 unique alumni via 8+ events/opportunities).
- **Weekend Food Packs (WFP):** Meet monthly Weekend Food Pack distribution targets (Goal: 130 children via 260 food packs distributed every other week) based on assessed partner needs.
- **STEPS Program:** Successfully transition remaining STEPs participants (2) during program phase-out.
- **Fundraising:** Meet annual fundraising revenue targets to ensure program sustainability and organizational growth.

Special Thanks

Families Forward Charlotte is thrilled to unveil our strategic plan for the coming years. This roadmap will empower us to improve, grow, and deepen our support of families in our community.

This comprehensive plan results from countless hours of dedication and collaboration, and we are incredibly grateful to everyone who played a part. Our heartfelt thanks go to our dedicated committee members, led by board member, Dr. Carrie Graham, and to Matt Sharp from Sharp Advising for his invaluable guidance throughout this process. We also extend our deepest appreciation to every stakeholder who participated, sharing their insights and helping us shape a truly impactful vision.

This plan would not have been possible without the unwavering commitment of our dedicated Board of Directors and staff members who participated wholeheartedly in every planning session. We are so fortunate to work alongside such an amazing team, and we eagerly anticipate the new successes our families and volunteers will achieve in the coming years, all thanks to the collective efforts poured into this strategic plan!

Sincerely,



Carrie Christian
Executive Director



LEARN MORE

info@familiesforwardclt.org

(704) 695-1833

www.familiesforwardcharlotte.org