

# STRATEGIC PLAN

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EXECUTIVE  
SUMMARY &  
RECOMMENDATIONS

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2017-2022



# BACKGROUND

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Over the past five years, Akron Community Foundation has invested time and resources into becoming a more donor-centric organization. We have embraced new strategies and allocated resources in the areas of personnel, technology, and fundholder cultivation and engagement. In addition to tailored marketing to individuals, we have also increased outreach to professional advisors. We have listened to our donors and fundholders and utilized the community foundation industry's leading practices to create a more open, inviting and transparent place for philanthropy in our community.

The results speak for themselves: Since 2012, the community foundation has generated more than \$75 million in new contribution revenue while awarding a record \$9+ million in grants during each of the past two years. Assets have grown to a high-water mark of nearly \$196 million as of Dec. 31, 2016, and we are quickly approaching 600 charitable funds, all of which are records for our organization.

Akron Community Foundation has also assembled an incredibly talented and experienced team. Even during a period of rapid growth, our staff has improved operating systems and processes while simultaneously maintaining extraordinary levels of customer service. Our board of directors has joined staff in embracing our donor-centric model, and the organization is well-positioned to implement our new strategic plan while continuing to meet the needs of constituents in the Greater Akron community.



Steve Strayer  
*Vice Chair, Board of Directors*  
*Chair, Strategic Planning Committee*



John T. Petures Jr.  
*President and CEO*



# PLAN DEVELOPMENT

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Our current strategic planning process began over a year ago with our consultant from Boston and Akron Community Foundation's Strategic Planning Committee, composed of board leaders and senior staff. Throughout 2016, we engaged in discussions with a variety of constituents, including staff and board members, funders, nonprofit and business leaders, fundholders, professional advisors and donors.

With the ongoing support of our Strategic Planning Committee and with input from board members, we have identified six areas of strategic focus to improve the organization's future performance and effectiveness:

- **DONORS & STEWARDSHIP**
- **PROACTIVE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT**
- **LEADERSHIP & LEVERAGE**
- **LEGACY & FAMILIES**
- **GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY**
- **INFRASTRUCTURE & PHYSICAL PLANT**



## DONORS & STEWARDSHIP

Our donors remain at the heart of our mission. How do we continue to attract, enlighten and serve them as we grow permanent philanthropic capital and improve the human condition here in our community? How do we best serve our customers and return value/benefits to them and their families as fundholders? How do we differentiate ourselves from other charitable organizations and commercial donor-advised fund competitors?

## PROACTIVE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Although \$9+ million is a significant amount of resources being distributed by the foundation back into our community annually, how do we effectively measure and evaluate the true impact and effectiveness of our overall grant making? How do we utilize the knowledge and insights we've gathered and fulfill our leadership role in commissioning reports, convening players, incubating projects and building awareness of key community issues? How do we best "drive" and measure impactful efforts that will improve the quality of life in Greater Akron and Summit County?

## LEADERSHIP & LEVERAGE

Leadership is action—not position. We believe our role and reputation as a convener, facilitator and connector can, and must, be strengthened. How do we leverage what the organization can bring to the table (information, funding resources, community leadership and expertise, etc.) and maximize the impact of time, talent and treasure to solve critical problems in our community?

## LEGACY & FAMILIES

For 62 years, the Akron Community Foundation has been a proud advocate of building permanent philanthropy for the benefit of Greater Akron. This legacy is advanced by the board's discretionary grant making, as well as the personal generosity of thousands of contributors and nearly 600 current fundholders of the organization. Through the creation of Akron Community Foundation's Center for Family Philanthropy, dedicated resources will be brought to bear in building the vital infrastructure needed to support multigenerational family-related investment into programs and services that uplift people, communities and neighborhoods throughout Greater Akron and Summit County.

## GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

Revisions to our bylaws in 2016 created our new Governance Committee, which is charged with strengthening board leadership and the fulfillment of their stewardship responsibilities. The results and recommendations from our recently completed board self-assessment will help provide a blueprint for heightened engagement by the board. Our skills inventory will help capture expertise and interests of our board members and match them to various initiatives championed by the organization.

## INFRASTRUCTURE & PHYSICAL PLANT

It's vitally important that we look ahead as an organization and examine the physical capacity of Akron Community Foundation's headquarters to house and accommodate the growing demands on the organization. This includes determining what resources must be secured or redeployed to fulfill the objectives and tactics embraced in the community foundation's day to day operations and strategic plan.



## ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS: YEARS ONE THROUGH THREE

- Identify a baseline for proactive community investment by conducting a comprehensive community needs assessment of Greater Akron community.
- Host “On the Table” discussions, made possible by a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, on Oct. 3, 2017, bringing more than 1,000 Greater Akron residents together to discuss pressing community issues and help identify areas of proactive community investment by Akron Community Foundation.
- Strengthen our knowledge base and maximize our stewardship efforts by surveying all current fundholders through tools available from Center for Effective Philanthropy.
- Create a plan for proactive community investment that includes funding protocols, priorities and strategic community investment.
- Leverage our community investment department’s natural connectivity to nonprofit agencies by assigning it stewardship responsibilities for our agency endowment funds and design a robust assistance program specifically for nonprofits with endowment funds at the community foundation.
- Maintain an extraordinary level of customer service to donors and fundholders by restructuring the development department.
- Improve our understanding and knowledge of our fundholders, and donors’ desires through face-to-face contact with one-third of all fundholders beginning in Year One and continue to conduct these visits as part of ongoing donor cultivation and stewardship efforts.
- Demonstrate Akron Community Foundation’s commitment to legacy and families by designing and establishing our Center for Family Philanthropy.
- If deemed feasible, institute a “virtual platform” for learning, sharing and grant-making opportunities for all fundholders, donors and constituents of the organization.
- Reinforce the critical importance of board accountability and support the efforts of the Governance Committee; employ leading practices to improve the engagement, effectiveness, diversity and ultimate utilization of skills and expertise of our board members.
- Build greater awareness surrounding legacy giving and expand the advertising program of our organization beyond tailored ads to individuals and professional advisors.
- Enhance stewardship offerings and legacy planning; create planned giving capacity and expertise for the organization beyond current “referral” practices to various regional law firms.
- Examine and maximize the physical building capacity of the community foundation’s current headquarters based on the projected expansion of staff and the growing need for additional resources in the development and community investment areas during the next five years of our strategic plan execution.





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