



2020-2022

Featherfist 2020-2022 Strategic Plan



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Organizational Background and History</i> | 3 |
| <i>Letter from the Executive Director</i> | 5 |
| <i>Mission Statement</i> | 6 |
| <i>Vision Statement</i> | 6 |
| <i>Core Values</i> | 6 |
| <i>Critical Issues</i> | 7 |
| <i>Strategic Priorities</i> | 8 |
| <i>Goals and Strategies</i> | 9 |
| <i>Communications</i> | 9 |
| <i>Workforce</i> | 9 |
| <i>Financial Management and Technology</i> | 9 |
| <i>Resources Development</i> | 10 |
| <i>Programs and Services</i> | 10 |

Organizational Background and History

Featherfist, formed in 1984, serves homeless men, women and children and those “at risk” of becoming homeless throughout the City of Chicago. For the past thirty years it has provided extensive outreach; comprehensive case management and supportive services and referrals; and preparation for and access to permanent housing, with follow-up case management for a minimum of six months.

With “Power and Purpose” as its theme, Featherfist has developed model programs that successfully address the underlying causes of homelessness for individual clients and the homeless population as a whole. In 1990, Featherfist became formally incorporated as a 501C3, and received its first public funding in 1994. The successes to date have brought additional recognition and funding from the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Congressional Black Caucus and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Featherfist's four core activities include: Outreach and Engagement, Comprehensive Case Management, Housing and Veterans' Services. Outreach provides 24-hour emergency awareness to those in immediate need of housing assistance. This includes households who are unsheltered, living in uninhabitable places or those who are at immediate risk of homelessness. Comprehensive case management practices provide individually tailored services identified in a team approach with the participant to reduce barriers focused on: obtaining and maintain permanent housing, eliminating chronic homelessness, and ultimately achieving self sufficiency. Featherfist operates Featherfist Employment and Technology (FEAT)/Featherfist Employment and Vocational Services (FEAT/FEVS) a dual program that prepares our homeless participants to obtain and maintain employment by focusing on literacy skills, technology training, job readiness and career development.

Housing options include 5 stable housing programs: Foundations, FORT I, FORT II, Veterans Transition in Place (TIP) and Hope Village, where the goals are to eliminate the crisis, provide secure/safe housing units, and assist the households in obtaining permanent housing. Once participants transition from temporary housing, placement is made to permanent housing using a variety of resources including permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing and affordable market rate units. Featherfist provides Permanent Supportive Housing to those who are able to take on the responsibility of a lease, but require counseling, training and supervision for a period of time to become totally independent. Disabled, homeless individuals and families are provided with scattered-site housing appropriate in size and location for each family. The Featherfist Housing Department is a stand alone team of housing locators that have specialized training in locating housing and managing the move in process.

Lastly, a range of services are provided to veterans and their families: outreach, system navigation, housing and prevention services for those experiencing housing instability. In addition to the four (4) core service areas, Featherfist also provides supportive services to

senior citizens and veterans residing in housing other than Featherfist's. Housing location placement is made for persons exiting nursing homes and persons who are engaged in services with anti-violence providers throughout the city.

Letter from the Executive Director

Had this Plan been written for publication on January 1, 2020 it would have contained charts, projections, all manner of data and correlations of one sort or another. It would have ended with confidence and major accomplishments, proudly heralding our *next steps*.

But, as Fate would have it, July 1, 2020 presents us, all of us, all of humanity with only *one next step*, to survive; to survive the Virus and its' awful consequences.

Featherfist's mission is to proclaim to our homeless participants, that they have a positive and productive destiny assigned to them and that we/Featherfist will dedicate our energies to escorting them to the successful fulfillment of locating and living that singular destiny.

But for this sojourn we will need all of our courage and skills to save our clients and now, to save ourselves. There are many of us, homeless and not homeless, who have lost friends and family to the Virus. Our fear initially held us back, but only for a moment. *We are part of the Essentials*. We are the go-to people for whom the homeless seek for succorance, constancy and hope.

The new and distorted reality of what is normal or possible within the human condition is so unimaginable and unsettling, that each day demands we draw upon some cosmic, unseen, untouchable force and beg for the strength to hang on, to believe it will be alright again soon.

But for us and the people we serve, *alright* represents the status quo or the less than; and for some, the *less than less*. Our Plan is not to abandon them. Our plan is to continue to serve on the street, in encampments, in shelters, in transitional housing and motels and hotels and cars and corners; sometimes even in our office.

Our place is where the homeless and the vulnerable reside. We are familiar with their address. They are familiar with Us. Gloved hands and caring eyes we walk into the fray of the discarded and the frightened. We are frightened too, but we are armed with right and justice and duty.

We bring power and purpose to our kindred in the homeless community.

This is our Strategic Plan.

This is Featherfist !

Mission Statement

Our mission is to instill “power and purpose” to vulnerable households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Chicago by assisting them in their advancement toward self-sufficiency through the provision of stable housing , case management, training and connection to benefits and resources. It is our mission to end homelessness.

Vision Statement

Our Vision is that vulnerable populations/individuals/households who have experienced the trauma of homelessness embrace their power and purpose as a steps towards ending intergenerational poverty.

Core Values

- We believe in the value of every human life
 - We believe everyone should have a place called home
 - We believe in the autonomy of each individual
 - We believe in going the extra mile
 - We believe in leaving judgment at the door
 - We believe everyone has a story, which has a voice
 - We believe in limitless possibilities
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Critical Issues

- Time management at an all-time low
- Featherfist is seen as a southside housing organization and not a citywide organization providing housing
- VA funders increasing monitoring expectations
- Current national political climate dictating course of funding
- Increased competition for funding
- Rent increasing and less affordable housing
- Chicago is now part of a coordinated entry system (CES) which limits Featherfist's ability to define who will work with from the community.
- Staff morale
- Upgrade technology
- Increase training for staff to remain current in using technology
- Improved communication both internal and external
- Limited social media presence
- Need for more cross training
- Protocols need to be followed consistently

Strategic Priorities

- Continue to generate diverse resources to support the growth of the organization ensuring its capacity to meet the needs of clients.
- Continue investment in the development of staff ensuring staff have a clear understanding of their roles and how they are accountable in delivering consistent, high quality service to clients.
- Improve internal and external communications
- To maintain involvement in policy-making bodies on local, regional and national levels in advocating for the needs of Chicago's homeless
- Ensure program leaders are goal-focused and consistently track program performance on an ongoing basis
- Use performance data for evaluation, reporting and accountability with funders and donors
- Ensure the organization has succession plans in place for all key leadership positions.

Goals and Strategies

Communications

Goal: Expands our organization's visibility and reach throughout our service area.

Strategies

- Develop and launch a communication campaign designed to grow awareness throughout Chicago
- Assessing use/necessity of social media platforms
- Creating and adhering to a posting and engagement calendar
- Expanding audience through increased engagement
- Consider and execute rebranding and modernization of logo and website
- Increase support from donors, volunteers, and fund-raisers through regular communication.
- Integrate program performance data in sharing metrics with funders and donors

Workforce

Goal: Continue to cultivate our workplace culture by investing in the development our employees.

Strategies

- Ensure job descriptions reflect current responsibilities for all employees
- Conduct training to ensure all employees know their duties and are positioned to maximize impact
- Provide annual evaluation and performance improvements to staff and celebrate accomplishments
- Convene regular training on program models ensuring new/current staff are well-versed and can deliver required services

Financial Management and Technology

Goal: Enhance our current systems ensuring alignment with our projected growth

- Integrate new CRM technologies to augment our communication and fundraising efforts.
- Expand procedures for reviewing grant reporting requirements before grant submission
- Modify policies pertaining to subcontracting awards to ensure the organization is not at financial risk
- Build out forms on Google drive to allow supplemental information to be collected beyond funder requirements
- Schedule accounting training on Financial Edge and Excel"

Resources Development

Goal: Increase unrestricted, and diverse funding sources to sustain the organization.

Strategies

- Explore opportunities to pursue local, state and federal grant opportunities to enhance the core work of the organization
- Explore the feasibility of launching a planned giving program.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive development plan to exceed our annual, operating goal.
- Continue to expanding financial partnerships with area funders through regular meetings and communications
- Ensure alignment of overall communication efforts to strategically reach potential donors

Programs and Services

Goal: Continue to provide high quality programs and services to support homeless individuals and families throughout our service area.

- Evaluate and leverage strategic partnerships with organizations that provide complementary supports to our work.
- Continue to track program performances and use metrics to help ensure organization achieves desired outcomes
- Periodically reevaluate the environment to identify potential threats or opportunities that could impact the organization.
- Remain engaged in local, state, federal representatives to provide them with education on the plight of the homeless and proposed solutions.
- Participate in local and regional tables convened to advocate on policies affecting homeless populations