



# Strategic Plan

2024 - 2029

## Introduction

SustainEd Farms started as a small seed of an idea in 2018, and has grown into a blooming organization that supports students and communities throughout and beyond Denver, CO. Together we've gotten our hands dirty to understand what sustainable agriculture looks like on school and community campuses, we've explored all the different tastes our gardens have to offer, and we've dug in to working with students and community members to make lasting change in our communities.

As all gardeners know, growing plants are often supported by trellising to guide the plant's growth and to protect its flowers and fruits. Similarly, organizations need structure to guide them, so we are introducing the SustainEd Farms Strategic Plan - our metaphorical trellis to provide a framework for responsible organizational growth over the next five years.

This Strategic Plan outlines the goals, initiatives, and desired outcomes that will support our teams in working toward achieving the organization's mission: *Grow food. Grow knowledge. Grow justice.*

Optional: We're looking forward to all the work ahead of us and detailed below in this document. We're confident it will put us on the path toward a more sustainable future for our communities, and we hope you'll grow with us!



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## Executive Summary

SustainEd Farms' core mission is to Grow Food, Grow Knowledge, and Grow Justice. In just over five years, SustainEd Farms has grown immensely. By 2019, SustainEd had only supported 3 school gardens, programmed with 360 students, and grew 350 lbs of produce. In 2023, we cultivated 24 gardens with 6,500 students, produced over 3,000 lbs of food, and served more than thirty school communities, providing fresh food and sustainability education to combat food insecurity in Denver. Every day, SustainEd Farms continues to foster the vision that all students will be prepared to create, lead, and participate in sustainable communities.

In order to continue to grow this mission, the SustainEd Farms Board of Directors is looking toward the next five years and have designed the following strategic plan aimed at ensuring **SustainEd Farms has the resources required to deepen and expand its unique impact**. The premise of our plan focuses on transitioning from a successful founding organization to a strong, sustaining one – continuing to collaboratively foster food equity through education.

This plan was developed alongside SustainEd Farms staff with input from community stakeholders - teachers, principals, and district partners. Throughout this process, we've looked back at student feedback, school programming, and results from initiatives over the last five years to help us understand, develop, and shape the path to the next five years' vision.

To accomplish that vision, we are focused on the following strategic priorities:

1. **Financial Sustainability:** SustainEd Farms will create stable, recurring, and diverse sources of funding to sustain and support growing activities and programs. We will accomplish this by growing partnerships across the philanthropic and corporate community as well as continuing to foster our individual donor base.
2. **Staff Sustainability:** SustainEd Farms will develop a robust Human Resources strategy that supports the expansion of the organization and develops, trains, and retains existing and new staff.
3. **Program Sustainability:** SustainEd Farms intentionally scales programming and capacity in order to maximize value and impact across target communities, while remaining aligned with core mission. Grow, but grow well.
4. **Community Sustainability:** SustainEd Farms will strengthen student and community voice across all programming, cultivate intentional partnerships, and foster deeper roots alongside communities in order to grow the impact of our mission.

SustainEd Farms will focus on each strategic priority over the course of the next five years; some priorities will be accomplished in the short-term, while others may take multiple years.

SustainEd Farms was incorporated in 2018 with a vision to make a difference; in five years, that vision has grown from small programs at community libraries and one school garden to larger initiatives across multiple communities. Building upon the first five years'



success will be critical to our growth, and we cannot wait to see what the work of staff, students, and partners can do to Grow **more** Food, Grow **more** Knowledge, and Grow **more** Justice over the next five years.

## Strategic Priorities

### Priority 1: Financial Sustainability

#### Goal

SustainEd Farms will create stable, recurring, and diverse sources of funding to sustain and support growing activities and programs. We will accomplish this by growing partnerships across the philanthropic and corporate community as well as continuing to foster our individual donor base.

#### Initiative One: Grow Corporate Sponsors

*Create and grow a corporate sponsorship program.*

##### Expected Outcomes

- SustainEd Farms will have a diverse pool of reliable corporate sponsors that support the organization's school and community based programs and events on a recurring basis.
- SustainEd Farms's corporate sponsors will meaningfully support the organization's mission and vision.

#### Initiative Two: Foster Expansion of Individual Donor Base

*Expand the Individual Donor component of our revenue.*

##### Expected Outcomes

- SustainEd Farms staff will acquire a tracking and management system to better understand and streamline outreach to individual donors.
- SustainEd Farms will actively reach out to, attract and foster relationships with individuals who share our enthusiasm for our mission and seek their financial support on an ongoing basis.

#### Initiative Three: Cultivate Foundations & Grants Partnerships

*Continue to advance our activities and efforts with Foundations, granting organizations, and other groups that support our endeavors.*

##### Expected Outcomes

- SustainEd Farms staff and leadership have an established process for evaluating the success of grant and foundation applications and programs. We will continue our efforts to attract Foundations, granting and other supportive organizations with a focus on large and/or multi-year opportunities.



- SustainEd Farms expands school and nonprofit partner collaborations to maximize grant opportunities for deeper programmatic impact.

## Initiative Four: Develop Spaces for Celebration & Fundraising

*Grow and strengthen SustainEd Farms' calendar of signature events, aligned to key annual needs, prioritizing those with mission-alignment, fundraising, and community outreach.*

### **Expected Outcomes:**

- SustainEd Farms' events will stabilize revenue throughout the year, allowing for stronger cash flow and growth in savings.
- SustainEd Farms staff and leadership have an established, predictable event cycle across multiple partnerships with a variety of event types.
- SustainEd Farms community members and partners have an increased connection to and understand the value of SustainEd Farms' mission and programs.



## Priority 2: Staff Sustainability

### Goal

SustainEd Farms will develop a robust Human Resources strategy that supports the expansion of the organization and develops, trains, and retains existing and new staff.

### Initiative 1: Build & Sustain a Comprehensive Human Resources Plan

*Create a clear, actionable path to growing and supporting SustainEd Farms' Staff*

#### Expected Outcomes:

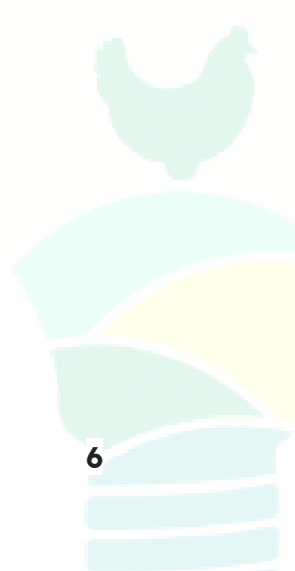
- SustainEd Farms grows its capacity to hire and retain part- and full-time staff, including access to a competitive compensation and benefits package as well as opportunities for ongoing professional development.
- SustainEd Farms has a timeline to meet the organizational requirements necessary to sustainably employ and retain full-time staff to expand organizational capacity.

### Initiative 2: Nurture Talent

*Train and support staff to provide skills, knowledge, and resources related to SustainEd Farms gardens and programs rooted in diversity, equity, and inclusion.*

#### Expected Outcomes:

- SustainEd Farms is staffed to its necessary capacity in order to execute its mission with fidelity.
- SustainEd Farms' staff have the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to provide high quality, mission-aligned programs for students and community members.





## Priority 3: Program Sustainability

### Goal

SustainEd Farms intentionally scales programming and capacity in order to maximize value and impact across target communities, while remaining aligned with core mission. Grow, but grow well.

### Initiative 1: Cultivate & Evaluate Program

*Define metrics and guidelines for evaluating outcomes with partner schools and assessing execution of organization's mission.*

#### Expected Outcomes:

- SustainEd Farms leadership and staff understand and prioritize key attributes when evaluating prospective partner schools and organizations to assess fit holistically across SustainEd Farm's portfolio.
- SustainEd Farms consistently tracks defined performance metrics across each of its partner schools.
- SustainEd Farms continues to enhance its processes and metrics for evaluating program performance on a periodic and regular cadence.

### Initiative 2: Develop Menu of Services

*Define an inventory and develop a suite of programming offerings, grounded in the organizational mission, available to partner communities.*

#### Expected Outcomes:

- SustainEd Farms has increased consistency across core programming offerings, while retaining flexibility to provide additional, customized programming for partner schools and/or organizations in particular focus areas.
- SustainEd Farms has a summary of existing programming offerings to reference in internal and external programming discussions.
- SustainEd Farms has a centralized repository of resources and tools for staff to utilize in development and delivery of programming as well as to facilitate information-sharing.
- SustainEd Farms has a process for developing, launching, and evaluating new programming in alignment with the mission and goals of the organization.
- SustainEd Farms defines a clear financing model for member schools to ensure predictability and transparency.



## Priority 4: Community Sustainability

### Goal

SustainEd Farms will strengthen student and community voice across all programming, cultivate intentional partnerships, and foster deeper roots alongside communities in order to grow the impact of our mission.

### Initiative 1: Nurture Student Voice & Leadership

*Incorporate student voice into planning, while building consistent and differentiated student leadership opportunities within programming and the organization.*

#### Expected Outcomes:

- SustainEd Farms staff incorporates student input in organizational and programmatic decisions.
- SustainEd Farms students participate in programming that is responsive to their expressed needs and desires.
- SustainEd Farms leadership has expanded processes and programs for developing student leaders.
- SustainEd Farms students have a pathway to deeper engagement in SustainEd Farms programming over time.

### Initiative 2: Strengthen Community Partnerships

*Clearly define criteria for community partnerships and establish ongoing, meaningful opportunities for community collaboration, including a volunteer program.*

#### Expected Outcomes:

- SustainEd Farms' leadership has an established system and process for evaluating potential partners to ensure mission alignment and improve efficiency.
- SustainEd Farms' partnerships are strategically established to maximize opportunities that are mutually beneficial and positively impact the community.
- SustainEd Farms' leadership has established processes for onboarding, supporting, and retaining volunteers.

### Initiative 3: Broaden Support & Communicate Impact

*Increase brand awareness and boost engagement in SustainEd Farms' events and programs through intentional marketing and promotion.*

#### Expected Outcomes:

- SustainEd Farms' consistently communicates its impact through content creation on multi-media platforms.
- SustainEd Farms develops a robust marketing strategy that increases its following and supports the promotion of the organization's mission and results.





## Appendix

### Methodology

This section is currently in draft form and will include information about how SustainEd Farms developed the Strategic Plan, focusing in particular on efforts to gather input from both inside and outside the organization. In addition to explaining how we have drawn from our experience over the last five years (e.g., programming success, grants feedback, etc.), this section will describe other key inputs for the Strategic Plan at a high-level, including:

- Input from organization leadership and staff
- Input from the Board of Directors
- Input from external stakeholders (including school and community partners)
- Market analysis

### Definitions

**Mission** - Mission statements define what an organization contributes to the community - what we do and who we do it for. Mission statements provide the basis from which strategic elements are developed.

**Priority** - The priorities are the areas where we need to focus our attention in order to achieve that wildly important goal. Each priority area has its own goal and initiatives.

**Goal** - The goals are the desired result for the priority area, the long-term target over the duration of the strategic plan.

**Initiative** - The initiatives under each goal are the driving force toward achieving that goal for the priority area. Actions and strategies will be built out under each initiative to ensure its success.

**Expected Outcome** - These are the intended results for each initiative that describe what success of that initiative will look like and how it will impact the organization and those we serve and work with.

