



EDUCATION FIRST, INC.

STRATEGIC PLAN

2015 – 2020

Our Vision	Empower rural and underserved communities through education and health programs.
Our Mission	<p>Provide quality education and school-based health programs to children and youths in rural and underserved communities.</p> <p>Support community-based health and literacy programs</p>
Who We Serve	Education First, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to serving rural and underserved communities in Liberia and the United States.
Our Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Center • Elementary School • Computer Literacy • Health and Nutrition • Professional Development of Teachers • Scholarships
Strategic Plan 2015-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SP 1: Expansion of Programs • SP 2: Funding Opportunities • SP 3: Governance and Operations • SP 4: Engagement and Partnership

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Education First, Inc. was formally registered as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization in the United States and Liberia in 2011. However, the groundwork began in 2008 when the Executive Director visited Liberia. As he traveled across the country he came across overcrowded classroom with children sitting on 2 x 4 x 10 lumber supported by cement blocks as they wrote with notebooks on their laps.

In September 2012, Education First established Education First Academy (EFA) in Harper, Liberia with a total enrollment of 15 children. By the second year the enrollment had increased six folds. The Academy comprises of an early childhood center and elementary school.

In addition to the establishment of the schools, the organization provides community-based services providing professional development workshops for teachers in rural and underserved communities and supporting community-based health education programs. The organization is widely recognized for its advocacy for quality education for children and youths and school-based health and nutrition issues.

CORE VALUES

The organization's core values serve as the foundation of our organizational culture, key measures of our success, and the underlying principles that guide how we work with our donors and contributors. We live them through our interactions with each other and the communities we serve, our programs, service delivery and measurement, our hiring, and employee development. The core values of Education First, Inc. are:

Service: We are committed to delivering remarkable service that is based on mutual respect regularly exceeding the expectations of our clientele.

- We meet our vision and mission through producing internal and external work of the highest quality possible.
- We seek and accept challenges and critiques to improve the quality of our programs.
- We treat all clientele and sponsors with dignity and meet them where they are to provide the right services in a way that is relevant to the needs of the communities.
- We support each other as a team to help provide superior, community-centered service and programs.

Integrity: We interact with each other and the communities we serve in a way

that is respectful, fully transparent, and ethical.

- We approach all situations with honesty, respect and transparency.
- We respect the confidential nature of those we work with and serve and actively protect client, donor and constituent information.
- We are responsible to our members, board, donors and the communities and country we serve, ensuring that our programs and activities meet the highest standards of professional and personal integrity.
- We accept responsibility for our mistakes and make appropriate amends.
- We uphold the highest level of ethical standards and seek to remedy any breach of those standards appropriately.

Collaboration: We value collaboration and seek partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals. We build strong working relationships and coalitions to help ensure self-reliance and sustainability as ultimate goals of our work.

- We seek the ideas and opinions of others to enhance the quality of our work.
- We create and participate in brainstorming, project development and problem-solving activities as a staff, with partners and constituents, and in the community.
- We maintain the highest level of quality throughout each stage of collaborative efforts.
- We make ourselves available and accessible to others, both within the organization and outside.
- We are actively available to support each other's work to further our mission.

Innovation: We develop, implement and share new ideas, creative solutions and leading nonprofit practices.

- We question why we do things and seek to improve current methods.
- We practice new ideas and report results for the benefit of others.
- We will find ways to improve systems, tools and ways of working together.
- We will not become complacent in our work.
- We will always seek new ideas and possibilities to further our mission.
- We are open to taking risks—and failing.

Accountability and Transparency: We follow the highest ethical standards,

and demonstrate honesty and fairness in every action that we take. Measurable outcomes and sound financial management are important elements of our accountability. We expect the same from our partners and those we serve.

Stewardship: We are able to accomplish our mission through the generosity of our members and others. We respect donors' intentions on the use of their gifts, and how we report to them the resources they entrust us with.

Learning: We pursue and promote continuous learning and professional development of our teachers, staff and other workers.

- We encourage pursuance of knowledge and skills to improve the quality of programs and services to provide to the communities we serve.
- We are dedicated to sharing our skills, knowledge, and expertise for the good of all.

Caring: We service underserved and rural communities through our educational and health programs at reduced or no cost to the disadvantaged population.

Empowerment: We mobilize and empower children, youths, and communities in general by providing opportunities for the good of the public.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2015 – 2020

Strategic Plan 1: Program Expansion

How can we expand our programs to enable us to meet the growing demand of the educational and health services in order to make a larger impact in the communities we serve?

Goal 1: Construct an early childhood and an elementary school. To make quality education accessible to as many students as possible there is a need to construct our own facility. This will also enable us to improve the quality of the early childhood and elementary school programs. To achieve this goal there is need to:

- a. Create an online platform to help raise funds
- b. Identify grant opportunities and go after them
- c. Increase the number of donors

- d. Expand annual fundraising events both in the United States and Liberia

Goal 2: Early Childhood and Elementary School Program. Improve the quality of the early childhood education program and the elementary school education.

- a. Continue to provide teachers and administrators with ongoing professional development workshops periodically.
- b. Promote the importance of early childhood education through a community awareness/education media campaign.
- c. Gain the recognition of the Ministry of Education as providers of early childhood education and elementary education.

Goal 3: Health Program. Develop the school-based physical health, dental and nutrition programs.

- a. Identify health personnel to conduct needs assessment of how we can implement the physical health program. Work closely with the office of the chief medical director of the county to aid in the development.
- b. Revisit the dental health program and identify ways to improve the quality.
- c. Revisit the nutrition program and find ways to solicit external support to help make it more efficient and viable.

Goal 4: Computer Literacy Program. Expand the computer literacy program.

- a. Recruit computer literacy teachers and provide them with in-service training.
- b. Extend the program to include adult computer literacy as a way to make parents sensitive to the importance of a computer literate parent.

Goal 5: Student Scholarship Program. Develop strategies to increase the number students who receive external financial support.

- a. Communicate with parents about the organization's expectations from them for students in the scholarship program.

Strategic Plan 2: Funding Opportunities

How can EFI diversify, increase and sustain its financial resources to support and expand our programs for a bigger impact in Liberia?

Goal: Develop and implement a fundraising strategy that has annual and long-term goals that meet the budgetary needs of Education First, Inc.'s operations and programs.

- Pursue grants and donations from foundations, individuals, organizations, and corporations by programmatic specialty.
- Create an online fundraising platform
- Require that a routine percentage of income (15% -20%), is designated for general administration operations.
- Find assistance with grant writing
- Report on levels of giving in the annual report.
- Expand annual fundraising events both in the United States and Liberia

Strategic Plan 3: Governance and Operations

How can EFI organize itself for more efficient management of its work in the Liberia and the U.S.?

Good governance and management are central to addressing this strategic plan. We define governance as a set of policies and practices that enable EFI to achieve its mission and to respond strategically to present and future needs. Our approach is grounded in EFI's core values: service, partnership, accountability, transparency, integrity, and stewardship. Good governance and management ensure that we manage our resources efficiently and effectively, and that we protect and reflect the interests of our stakeholders and those we serve. The following goals and strategies are drawn from the results of the SWOT matrix and research into best practice for non-profit organizations.

Goal 1: Strengthen the human capacity and infrastructure of EFI.

- As funds are available, hire a paid grant writer on a part-time basis, to search for grant opportunities and write grants. Payment can come in the form of percentage of program grant(s) awarded.
- Board members become more actively involved in their respective roles.

- Recruit volunteers willing to be part of program and project implementation.
- Improve the physical infrastructure of the organization's office in Liberia.

Goal 2: Clearly redefine roles and responsibilities at every level of the organization and strengthen institutional presence in Liberia.

- Clarify and update roles and responsibilities of and the relationships between the Board and Committee members in the U.S. and Liberia
- Explore establishing an EFI fund-raising team and program planners in Liberia.
- Develop a Board handbook for Liberia and conduct professional development workshops for Board and Committee Members in the U.S. and Liberia.
- Develop and implement a strategy for identifying and recruiting volunteers to provide services in Liberia and the U.S.
- Update by- laws and other governing documents accordingly.

Goal 3: Computerize and use sound financial management basic principles and practices to track and maintain financial health of the organization.

- Issue quarterly financial reports to support decision making by the Board of Director.
- Use software such as QuickBooks to keep accounts.
- Conduct an annual audit (pro bono preferred).
- Publish an annual report that includes financial and program results.

Goal 4: Identify and use appropriate technology to enhance communication among individual donors and institutions.

- Allow and facilitate virtual participation in board, executive and committee meetings (e.g., Skype, FaceTime, Go To Meeting, Conference call, Video Conferencing).
- Use email, website, Facebook, twitter and other forms of technology including social media to communicate efficiently and effectively with members, partners and others.
- Manage and share EFI documents on an on-line platform (e.g., Dropbox, Google Docs, HostMonster).

Strategic Plan 4: Engagement and Partnerships

How can EFI engage its U.S. and Liberia Board of Directors and Committee Members to help carry out its mission and operations in Liberia and the U.S.?

Goal 1: Identify organizations with similar goals that EFI can strategically partner with in organizing programs that will help advance the vision and mission of the organization.

- Each Board Member identifies at least one organization that EFI can collaborate with.

Goal 2: Develop programs for Board and Committee members to participate in and encourage active involvement of all wherever they reside.

- Offer development programs (e.g., physical health, sponsorship, dental health, professional development) for Board and Committee Members to participation both in Liberia and U.S.
- Organize international, regional and local programs and periodic service trips by volunteers and Board and Committee Members.
- Establish and maintain an on-line talent and skill database for EFI and friends of EFI interested in international service and consulting opportunities in Liberia.

