



Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026

Approved and adopted by the Board of Directors on May 13, 2022

Table of Contents

- 1. Strategic Plan Infographic**
- 2. Brief History of Hope Seeds International**
- 3. Need for a New Strategic Plan**
 - a. World Food Insecurity
 - b. Hope Seeds Evolution
 - c. Past Strategic Plan
 - d. Steps Toward a New Strategic Plan
- 4. Vision, Values, and Mission**
 - a. Vision
 - b. Values
 - c. Mission
- 5. Strategic Objectives and Goals**
 - a. Sustainability
 - b. Strong Partnerships
 - c. Holistic Outcomes
 - d. Global Community
- 6. Appendices**
 - a. HSI Customer Analysis

1. HSI Strategic Plan Infographic



Strategic Objectives 2022 - 2026



2. Brief History of Hope Seeds International

Motivated by Christian faith and concern for the hungry, Hope Seeds, Inc. was founded as a non-profit organization by Mike and Jean Mueller in 1999. Mike and Jean, in beginning the work of Hope Seeds, were able to draw on extensive experience in the seed industry and farming and, along with Orville Mueller, served as the original Board of Directors. Hope Seeds initial filing as a non-profit organization occurred in the State of Florida on March 10, 1999, and the organization has been headquartered in Bradenton, Florida, since that time. David Balsbaugh was confirmed as the second Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Hope Seeds on February 15, 2019. The “do business as” name of Hope Seeds International, Inc. (HSI) was adopted for the organization on October 15, 2020.

For the past 20 years, HSI has focused on delivering quality garden seed to families, widows, schoolchildren and orphans through missionaries and mission agencies in hungry communities in the most food insecure regions. The seeds have been purchased from US suppliers, packed by volunteers into “family packs” of 8 to 12 vegetable varieties (enough for a family garden of ½ acre), and delivered via mission agency shipments or in the suitcases of traveling missionaries. Based on strong historic partnerships with mission agencies in Haiti and Uganda, these countries received the most support from HSI over the years, but dozens of missionaries in more than 20 countries throughout the Caribbean, Central America, Africa and Eastern Asia have received seeds. A unique aspect of the HSI ministry is that included with each family pack is a “Message of Hope” tract that conveys the love and truth of Jesus.

3. Need for a New Strategic Plan

Since HSI was founded more than 20 years ago, there have been significant changes in world food insecurity, approaches to Christian missionary and agricultural development work, and in HSI itself. All these are important factors that point toward the need for evaluation of the relevance of our approach and necessary evolution.

a. World Food Insecurity

According to the UN¹, while extreme poverty has been declining on a global basis since 1990, there are still between 720 and 811 million people living in extreme poverty who face daily food insecurity, many of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia. The World Bank² estimates that around 10% of the world’s people live in extreme poverty, which means they are surviving on less than \$1.90 a day. In addition to extreme poverty, the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity is also great, and 17% (or 1.3 billion) people lacked regular access to “nutritious and sufficient food¹.” Malnutrition remains a global health emergency affecting large populations with both undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Hunger is on the rise in almost all African subregions, making Africa the region with the highest prevalence of undernourishment, at almost 20 percent. Hunger is also slowly rising in Latin America and the Caribbean, although its prevalence is still below 7 percent. In Asia, Western Asia shows a continuous increase since 2010, with more than 12 percent of its population undernourished today. Experts predict hunger will continue to increase as a result of the COVID-19 crisis along with the impacts of regional conflicts and climate change.

b. HSI Evolution

Since the work of HSI was begun during the late 1990’s, the basic pattern of relief efforts has remained virtually unchanged although there have been some changes in specific mission

¹ [The State of Food Insecurity and Nutrition in the World 2021](#). Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed February 15, 2022.

² [Decline of Global Extreme Poverty Continues but Has Slowed](#). World Bank, September 19, 2018.

agencies and missionaries who are supported. For a number of years, Haiti and Uganda were the most important areas of effort for HSI based both on the needs in these countries and available partnerships, and significant local staff support was provided to facilitate efforts in these countries. More recently, seed distribution efforts for Haiti have increased whereas seed distribution in Africa has decreased, due in part to diminished partnerships in the region. Historically, HSI has placed most emphasis on *quality* and *quantity* of seeds packed and shipped to trusted partners around the world but has not been able to regularly assess the effectiveness and sustainability of seed distribution and gardening efforts among recipients. In addition, although a significant volume of educational materials related to gardening, seed saving, and nutrition were developed by HSI over the years, few initiatives were developed to enable delivery and implementation of these materials with worldwide partners.

What has changed is that leadership and staffing of HSI has shifted from the pioneer, founding generation to a next generation interested and open to new opportunities and ways of working. In addition, a decade long effort to expand the work of HSI to include seed development and heirloom variety preservation at a remote Missouri farm was recently abandoned as impractical.

c. Past Strategic Planning

HSI has developed several strategic plans since its founding with the most recent version having been adopted in January of 2018. The strategic objectives and associated goals of that existing HSI plan were strongly focused on practical aspects of *transition* in the organization (leadership, facilities, finances, operations) and weren't especially visionary in terms of serving as "overarching aims" or setting "fundamental, long-term direction".

d. Steps Towards a New Strategic Plan

Beginning in mid-2019, HSI Board members and Executive leadership began to evaluate the changing landscape of world food needs and agricultural missions and how HSI might best adapt and focus its efforts for effective future service to the world's most food insecure communities. Steps that were followed in developing the updated strategic plan included:

- i. *Review of the 2018 strategic plan* – We began by examining the most recent strategic plan to determine which objectives had been completed, were no longer relevant, or required continued effort. These latter objectives were carried over for further discussion related to inclusion in the new plan.
- ii. *Review and update of our vision, values, and mission* – We captured current perspectives for describing our picture of the future when our mission is accomplished (= vision). The values incorporated into the 2018 strategic plan seemed still highly relevant to us, and these were retained. As we examined our mission statement, we felt a refresh was needed in order to better reflect a holistic approach to serving food insecure neighbors with both empowering aid for gardening as well as the message of Christ.
- iii. *Customer needs assessment* – The voices of those we serve and those we partner with are very important in setting our direction, and insights gained from a "customer needs assessment" were used to help evaluate key services they value. Some of these services are already provided by HSI and some would be new for the ministry.
- iv. *Evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats* – This SWOT analysis put special emphasis on consideration of what things HSI has done well and should sustain and build upon (strengths) as well as what new initiatives might be considered to address currently unmet or evolving customer needs (opportunities).
- v. *Agreement on strategic objectives and goals* – Based on our mission, needs of our customers, and our strengths and opportunities, we recognized a need for overall objectives to guide our future efforts and specific, measurable actions we will pursue in achieving them.

4. Vision, Values and Mission of HSI

a. Vision of HSI

- A world where neighbors in food insecure lands are nourished by bountiful gardens and experience abundant life in Christ.

b. Values of HSI

- We value our Hope in Christ and follow His example of care for the whole person, physically and spiritually.
- We value empowering people to provide for their own food and nutrition in sustainable ways.
- We value working in collaboration with other agencies, ministries, missionaries and churches in serving global neighbors living with food insecurity.
- We value the volunteers, donors and resources that God provides to enable our work.
- We value excellence in the quality of the seed, gardening and nutrition guidance, and the message of Christian hope we share.
- We value the power of education about gardening and nutrition.
- We value the diversity of partnerships and products that collectively enable abundant gardens and bring hope to the food insecure.
- We value accountability to our stakeholders in terms of the resources entrusted to us and our practices in stewarding them, and are committed to a posture of transparency and proactive communication.

c. Mission of HSI

- Sharing the love of Christ and reducing hunger through worldwide partnerships, empowering people with sustainable food production skills, seeds, and resources.

5. Strategic Objectives and Goals

Strategic objectives are those few overarching aims that set the fundamental, long-term direction for a ministry in living out its mission. Strategic objectives flow from the vision, values, and mission, and aim the organization where it must go to build on strengths and capture opportunities in serving its customers. *Goals* in turn are more specific achievements and are supported by *tactical plans* or *action steps*; these are designed to move an organization toward accomplishing each of the strategic objectives.³

After study, discussion and prayer, the HSI Strategic Planning Committee and the entire Board agreed on the following strategic objectives and associated goals to help the organization move forward in effectively serving food insecure neighbors worldwide and their evolving needs. These strategic objectives and goals provide a framework for guiding the organization's annual priorities and plans as led by the CEO and with the approval and support of the Board. Thus, specific details as to *how* the objectives and goals are to be achieved are left to the discretion of

³ Drucker et al. "The Five Most Important Questions You Will Ever Ask About Your Organization." 2008. Leader to Leader Institute. Published by Jossey-Bass books.

the CEO so that flexibility can be maintained in adapting appropriate action plans for evolving circumstances and opportunities.

a. **Sustainability:** Position HSI for the next 20 years of service with expanded capabilities for enhancing food security and sharing the love of Jesus.

- *Rationale: HSI is moving through a period of significant transition of staff, location, facilities and operations. There is a need to firmly establish these along with strong underlying financial support in order for the work to thrive in addressing future opportunities. Key issues and opportunities to be addressed include staff and volunteer optimization, procurement of a permanent headquarters facility, and building of awareness of the HSI mission along with a reliable financial support base.*
- **Goal 1:** Build awareness of the work of HSI with potential volunteers and donors to diversify the support base so that no individual source routinely comprises more than 20% of our annual income.
- **Goal 2:** Optimize paid and volunteer staffing to expand the capacity and expertise required to meet needs, as finances allow, with special emphasis on growing to 50% FTE devoted to education, training and outreach.
- **Goal 3:** Within 5 years, secure access to a permanent headquarters facility for HSI in West-Central Florida that will accommodate future ministry growth.

b. **Strong Partnerships:** Grow the impact of HSI by strengthening relationships with the most effective partners serving in food insecure regions.

- *Rationale: The work of HSI only can proceed and grow via reliable and effective partnerships. We work today with a variety of partners, some well understood and effective and some perhaps not; there are other effective organizations we are not yet working with. This objective will result in strengthened relationships with a smaller number of the most effective partners and improved service to the food insecure we serve. Key issues and opportunities to be addressed include recognizing and building strategic partnerships, development of best practices for partnerships, and designation of regional priorities.*
- **Goal 1:** Recognize and strengthen working relationships with a set of 5-8 preferred partner organizations with demonstrated effectiveness in ministering to the whole person (agricultural/sustainable, evangelistic/discipleship); assumes implementation of a set of “partnership best practices” (mutual awareness,...).
- **Goal 2:** Continue to place first priority on partnership efforts in the Caribbean/Central American region while exploring opportunities for future priorities in Africa; within 5 years identify 2-3 key partners in Africa.⁴ Future priorities to be evaluated include portions of Asia and North America.
- **Goal 3:** Prioritize growth and expansion of seed-packing partnerships with churches and other organizations in Central Florida, with a goal of reaching a minimum capacity of 1 million packets/year.

⁴ We are still seeking a possible best term to describe our “top priority” area. The “10-40 Window” often refers to a rectangular geographic area stretching from North Africa through the Middle East to Asia, covering 68 countries (but missing the Caribbean and Central America). The “two-thirds world” refers to countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (which includes China, India, etc., that we don’t work in).

c. **Holistic Outcomes:** Develop more effective, comprehensive services to enable healthy gardens, improved nutrition, and abundant life in Christ.

- *Rationale: By combining our historic strength of providing high-quality garden seeds and the message of hope with additional elements such as irrigation, gardening know-how, pest control, fertilization, and/or nutrition guidance, HSI will provide more value to its customers. These other elements may be provided by us or through partnerships, and it will be important that supply of resources and information is complemented by efforts devoted to on-site training and discipleship.*

Goal 1: Develop agricultural training and education as a complementary service to the supply of seeds, including opportunistically partnering for related services (e.g., irrigation). Annual goals agreed with select partners include both seed and training outcomes.

Goal 2: Increase participation in efforts that integrate agricultural training and education with concerted efforts for Christian discipleship. Any training materials/events developed or promoted will creatively emphasize both aspects.

d. **Global Community:** Foster the development of life-affirming global connections between those who give and those who receive.

- *Rationale: Two major groups of supporters enable the work of HSI, volunteers and donors, and both increasingly desire to know more about effectiveness of their aid and wish to have more personal connections with those being assisted. To remain relevant for the next generation of supporters, HSI will seek innovative ways to build relationships and foster global connections. We believe that in doing so we will enrich and bless the lives of both those who give and those who receive.*
- Goal 1: Make the capture and dissemination of stories of gardening outcomes and personal transformation an organizational strength and distinction. Agree on adoption of readily implemented practices with each key partner that specify the level/form of feedback to be annually provided.
- Goal 2: Implement information technologies and partnership practices that enable ready tracking and reporting of seed fate from purchase and packing to distribution and gardening.

Appendix 6a - HSI Customer Analysis

Compiled during January of 2020, this analysis of HSI customers and what they value was completed to help guide our strategic planning. Updates were identified and included in February of 2022.

Primary customers – The people whose lives are changed by our efforts. Their needs and voices are very important to consider, but it can be difficult to obtain direct feedback from them.

Supporting customers – Those we partner with or rely on to enable the primary customer to be served. Based on their direct contacts with primary customers, they are also most helpful in discerning and communicating what the primary customers value. These supporting customers also have needs to be satisfied and, based on HSI actions to address them, may or may not choose to support the ministry.

Primary Customers	What They Value
<p>Neighbors in food insecure communities including: ...families ...schoolchildren and orphans ...widows</p> <p>Note: Some are already highly skilled gardeners and/or maturing disciples of Jesus and others may be relatively novices for gardening and/or lack knowledge of the Gospel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality garden seed not available locally. • Varieties of seed that aren't readily available. • Open-pollinated seed that allows seed to be saved for future planting. • Desirable vegetables for supplementing the family diet. • The ability to generate some income from sale of surplus vegetables to support school costs, etc,... • An opportunity to learn about gardening by experience (especially schoolchildren). • Training about gardening, nutrition, and cooking. • Irrigation capabilities, both single family and community gardens (e.g., quarter acre kit). • Pest control support (e.g., Cornell spray). • Experiencing the love of Jesus in the form of practical support and learning of the truth of Jesus via the Gospel
Supporting Customers	What They Value
Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directing their funds toward a worthy cause. • Knowing their funds are well used and handled ethically. • Knowing what specific assistance their funds provided, who was helped, what the outcomes were, (including stories, visuals, and/or statistics)
Seed packing volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directing their efforts toward a worthy cause. • Knowing where the seeds are going, who was helped, and what the outcomes were (including stories, visuals, and/or statistics). • The fellowship of seed packing events; the chance to meet and visit, make new friends.
Missionaries and mission agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The affordability of good quality seed. • Accessibility of seed that may not be available locally. • Funds for purchase of local seed (where available). • Training opportunities for mission staff (e.g., seed saving, soil management, bio-intensive agriculture) who can serve as trainers (in-person and on-line). • Partner staff able to give local training (e.g., personnel for local seed saving seminars). • Seeds provide a means of offering practical support in connecting with those people they serve in other ways. • Consulting about gardening, agriculture, nutrition. • A customized message of hope to meet specific needs.