

**FIRST COMMAND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION**

# **2022 STRATEGIC PLAN**

# “Strategy without action is like faith without works— it is dead.”

— CHARLES “SKIP” BOWEN, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD FCEF

## VISION

Empowering those who serve our Nation to make positive financial decisions through scholarships and superior financial education.

## MISSION

To educate those who serve.

## CORE VALUES

**Excellence:** Respond to those we serve in a manner demonstrating a desire to not only meet but exceed their needs and expectations.

*Inspiration*-Continuous quality improvement; excellence is the result of striving each day to do better than the last.

**Commitment:** Establish a culture that values and encourages the highest commitment to the values of the organization.

*Inspiration*-Accepting ownership and involvement in FCEF’s mission and goals; the strongest force in the world is a genuine and everlasting act of commitment.

**Resourcefulness:** Encourage individual responsibility that results in broad exchanges of innovation and creative ideas aimed at achieving the mission of the organization.

*Inspiration*-Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is a success.

**Diversity:** Value and respect all people while fostering a sense of shared experiences and common purpose.

*Inspiration*-Strength is not only in the similarities, but also in the differences.

## STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

For almost four decades the First Command Education Foundation has partnered with First Command Financial Services to provide tools for military members, families, and veterans to enhance their lives. At its heart our mission is very simple and can be found in our mission statement, “We educate those who serve.” Whether through scholarships, in person financial education seminars, online training, or other tools we have made a positive difference in the lives of thousands of service members and their families.

Fifteen years ago, we reorganized as a public charity. Strategically this move helped redefine the organization as an independent entity whose sole purpose is to help military members understand the complexities of achieving financial success and independence and provide scholarships to assist with advanced education. This is an amazing mission that can literally save lives. As I write this the suicide rate among veterans is very near an all-time high. It has long been recognized that a primary contributing factor related to suicide among military members and veterans is financial stress. We have the answer. The challenge is to use every avenue at our disposal to enable our voice to be heard. To proudly “Educate those who serve.”

The First Command Educational Foundation can justly be proud of the positive impact we have made. This strategic plan builds on that foundation and provides a template for future success. The focus is cradle to grave in a military member’s life. It encompasses FCEF’s role helping pre military youth programs to retirees and older veterans and everyone in between. The world that military members/families and veterans currently find themselves in is ever more complex. The challenges are very real and daunting. This plan answers the question of where is FCEF going? What type of organization we want to be in 3-10 years. By staying focused on the goals, action items, and measurements laid out in this plan we can and will expand our reach and make an even greater difference.

—Charles “Skip” Bowen  
Chairman of the Board

# ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY AND PROFILE

First Command Educational Foundation (FCEF) was created in 1983 to provide scholarships for military personnel and their dependents, FCEF is now a nonprofit 501(c) (3) public charity. FCEF's mission expanded in 2001 to include financial readiness training, and again in 2004 to broaden scholarship eligibility to students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees, professional certifications, and trade school studies.

Two significant events occurred since FCEF's incorporation as a private foundation. The first event occurred in 2001 when FCEF restructured its mission to not only provide scholarships to military dependents and students enrolled in Reserved Officer Training Corps (ROTC), but also to provide financial readiness education. To implement that initiative, FCEF split from the commercial company, First Command Financial Planning, and hired separate leadership under the governing authority of an independent Board of Directors. The second event occurred on January 1, 2006, when FCEF voluntarily terminated their private foundation status and were recognized by the IRS as a 501(c) (3) public charity. Subsequently, FCEF expanded their scholarship and educational programs beyond the military to the general population, with the majority of FCEF resources still focused on military audiences and their families.

FCEF strives to provide its educational programming at no cost to the user, (this is all service members and their families, DoD employees and veterans) as appropriate. The educational programming is delivered in various formats to include face-to-face presentations, workshops, seminars, and courses. FCEF also offers a variety of online educational programs to include web-based education.

FCEF is governed by an independent, volunteer Board of Directors (BoD) who provides oversight and guidance to the Foundation's operations and management. The BoD also approves necessary personnel and financial policy and procedures for the agency. Day-to-day operations and oversight of Foundation programs are exercised and managed through the leadership of a President and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

# STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

Focus areas are in priority order. With such a small staff it is clear that we cannot fully engage all areas at the same time with the same intensity. Engagement choices will be made based on priority order, opportunity and impact across multiple areas. It is difficult to impossible to forecast all the types of opportunity we be provided so no timeline is given.

- 1. Strengthen/Enhance relationship/support for First Command Field Force.**
- 2. Strengthen/Enhance relationship/support for First Command Bank.**
- 3. Complement financial education efforts provided by military services.**
- 4. Military Financial Aid organizations-outreach and support. Provide tools such as Take Command to assist aid organizations to complete their mission.**
- 5. Military and Veteran Support organizations-outreach and support. Provide tools and training.**
- 6. Military Spouses and families- Engage military spouse organizations. Provide tools and training.**
- 7. Veterans Administration -Seek relationships with senior leaders in the VA. Explore potential synergies including financial education tools for veterans.**
- 8. Military youth organizations-outreach and support. Civil Air Patrol Cadets, Navy League Sea Cadets, ROTC, etc. Explore potential synergies in youth education programs.**
- 9. Diversify Board of Directors-Target senior government/military as well as corporate/private sector experience**
- 10. Financial Education tools, Scholarships-Expand Take Command focus to include Veteran and pre-Military population.**
- 11. Marketing and Communications-Outreach to stakeholders/customers. Social media, success stories, etc.**

## 12. Revenue growth from organizations and individual donations.

# ACTION PLAN

**1. Strengthen/Enhance relationship/support for First Command Field Force.** Strive to drive the FCEF to become an integral and needed part of Advisors business plan and production. This will be a top-down effort engaging the Director of Field Force Operations, All 5 Directors of Advisor Operations, District Advisors and Advisors

**Actions:**

- a. Take Command Licensing Agreement
- b. Create Advisor Recognition Program
- c. Field Force sponsored Golf Tournaments
- d. Scholarship program

**2. Strengthen/Enhance relationship/support for First Command Bank.** Primarily focus on the E1-E4 market using FCEF's financial education offerings focused on young people just starting out in the military

**Actions:**

- a. Work with Bank to develop products that support the E1-E4 market, i.e. Take Command tool, Budget App, outreach to pre-military market such as recruiting programs, recruit training, etc
- b. Clarify roles. Ensure FCEF complements FCFS
- c. Leverage present and future information technologies

**3. Complement financial education efforts provided by military services.** Become recognized as the Financial Education provider of choice for the six military services.

**Actions:**

- a. Identify and cultivate strategic relationships with senior leaders across all military services.
- b. Continue to explore ways to have the military services adopt the Take Command tool as a part of their financial education programs.
- c. Continue and expand “in person” financial education classes with volunteer instructors. Conduct a minimum of 100 presentations to military/DoD audiences each year
- d. Pursue educational contracts with DoD military and Federal Agencies to provide financial education
- e. Maintain agreement/Service letters

**4. Military Financial Aid organizations-outreach and support.** Provide tools such as Take Command to assist aid organizations to complete their mission

**Actions:**

- a. Continue to mature partnership/program with CG Mutual Assistance
- b. Focus on Army/Air Force aid program outreach
- c. Navy/Marine Corps aid program

**5. Military and Veteran Support organizations-outreach and support.** Provide tools and training to military and veterans services organizations such as Association of the U.S. Army, Surface Navy Association, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, etc

**Actions:**

- a. Continue to work with AUSA to build out test of concept

b. Reach out to other groups-SNA, FRA, CPOA, American Legion

**6. Military Spouses and families- Engage military spouse organizations.** Provide tools and training to various military spouse organizations

**Actions:**

a. Reach out to military spouse organizations/leaders and explore synergies

**7. Veterans Administration** -Seek relationships with senior leaders in the VA. Explore potential synergies including financial education tools for veterans

**Actions:**

a. Create additional Take Command education modules focused on the needs of veterans

b. TAPS programs

c. Explore relationship with VA leadership

**8. Military youth organizations-outreach and support** Civil Air Patrol Cadets, Navy League Sea Cadets, ROTC, etc. Explore potential synergies in youth education programs  
Action items-

**Actions:**

a. Reach out to leadership and explore potential synergies

**9. Diversify Board of Directors** Target senior government/military as well as those with private sector experience. The goal is a Board balanced by Financial Services/Education professionals and professionals experienced in government and industry.

**Actions:**

a. Candidate search focus-

1. Passionate about FCEF mission to educate those who serve
2. Senior government, military, or corporate experience
3. Time for Board activities

## **10. Financial Education** - Scholarships, Presentations: In person and Online

### **Actions:**

- a. Award a minimum of 60, \$1,000 scholarships to military recipients through partnerships with First Command advisors each year
- b. Expand Take Command focus to include Veteran and pre-Military population
- c. Reduce the cost of Take Command by transitioning LMS from Blackboard to AdvanceNet, LMS used by non-profit organizations. Transition will start in 2022
- d. Continue to seek Take Command accreditation through American College of Financial Management

## **11. Marketing**- Increase revenue through brand awareness and marketing

### **Actions:**

- a. Purchase and maintain a website that will increase visibility
- b. Connect website keywords and content through SEO and SEM as well as social media
- c. Leverage present and future information technologies

After clear and defined market alignment, establish and align messaging between FCFS and FCEF to address confusion and concerns with core markets

## **12. Revenue growth** - from organizations and individual donations

### **Actions:**

- a. As revenue grows strategically expand Foundation staff. Current needs are administrative professionals with knowledge of various programs such as quick books and curriculum development personnel

# MEASURING FCEF SUCCESS

Listed below is the initial set of metrics that will be used to assess our success in achieving the goals and implementing the actions in this plan. These will evolve over time as execution continues.

## **Objective 1: Make the users of our programs successful**

- a. User feedback and recognition
- b. Repeat use by military service, Base/Installation/organization
- c. New users referred by current users
- d. Success stories are shared in social media. Include library of stories on website so that each unique story shared/clicked on by social media comes back to our website.

## **Objective 2: Increase the value of the FCEF brand**

- a. Growth in revenue/donations
- b. Growth in both user diversity and user numbers
- c. Achievement-new initiatives found in strategic goals/action items
- d. Recognition as leader in financial education
- e. Sustained continuous process improvement

## **Objective 3: Growth and “Health” of our people/FCEF team**

- a. Competitive compensation and benefits
- b. Growth in team member qualifications/certifications/skills
- c. Increase lifelong learning opportunities

d. Low turnover as determined by industry standards

e. Strategically increase staff as demand for FCEF products grow. Current needs are administrative professionals with knowledge of various programs such as quick books and curriculum development personnel