

NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION®

of Michigan

2026 Strategic Report

National Kidney Foundation of Michigan 2026–2031 Strategic Plan

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Prepared for
National Kidney Foundation of Michigan

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Executive Summary

For more than 75 years, the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan (NKFM) has served as a trusted leader in kidney disease prevention, education, advocacy, and patient support. As the healthcare landscape continues to evolve—and the needs of individuals and communities become increasingly complex—we recognize the importance of leveraging our strong foundation while preparing for the future. This strategic plan establishes a shared vision and roadmap for NKFM's future that aligns with the 2026–2031 CKD Prevention Strategy in Michigan, which was developed in partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. It is designed to focus organizational priorities, guide decision-making, strengthen accountability, and position the organization for long-term sustainability and impact. The plan reflects NKFM's commitment to improving kidney health while expanding its influence as a trusted partner in public health and healthcare across Michigan.

NKFM enters this planning period from a position of strength, with a long-standing reputation for high-quality programming and meaningful community impact. At the same time, the organization faces a rapidly changing environment characterized by evolving healthcare systems, increased service demands, persistent workforce challenges, and growing competition for philanthropic resources. These conditions create both challenges and growth opportunities, reinforcing the need for strategic focus, stronger partnerships, increased visibility, and diversified funding.

This plan is organized around six strategic priorities that will guide NKFM's work through 2031. Together, these priorities create an integrated framework that balances mission impact with organizational sustainability:

- Enhance community engagement and support for individuals affected by kidney disease.
- Strengthen partnerships to advance kidney health across healthcare systems and communities.
- Increase public awareness and position NKFM as the trusted voice in kidney health.
- Build long-term financial resilience through diversified and sustainable revenue.
- Invest in staff development, organizational culture, and operational excellence.
- Expand NKFM's leadership and influence in shaping kidney health policy and practice.

Executive Summary

Successful implementation of this strategic plan will result in stronger health outcomes for individuals and communities, deeper collaborations with healthcare and community partners, increased public awareness of kidney health, a more resilient and diversified funding model, and a highly engaged workforce equipped to meet future challenges. Collectively, these outcomes will strengthen NKFM's capacity to fulfill its mission and expand its impact throughout Michigan.

A strategic plan is only valuable when translated into action. NKFM is committed to implementing this plan through annual work plans, measurable objectives, ongoing evaluation, and regular reporting to the Board of Directors. Success will require continued collaboration among staff and board members, volunteers, partners, donors, and community stakeholders. By working together and remaining responsive to changing needs, NKFM will continue to improve the lives of those affected by kidney disease while building a healthier future for all Michiganders.

Linda Smith-Wheelock
President and CEO
National Kidney Foundation of Michigan



Introduction

The National Kidney Foundation of Michigan is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing kidney disease and improving the quality of life for individuals living with it throughout Michigan. In 2025, NKFM partnered with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to update the 2026–2031 CKD Prevention Strategy in Michigan, establishing a shared vision and priorities for advancing kidney health initiatives across the state.

To build upon this foundation, NKFM engaged Tuesday & Co. (T&Co.) in 2026 to facilitate the development of the organization's strategic plan, ensuring its future direction aligns with and supports the broader statewide strategy while addressing NKFM's unique role, strengths, and opportunities.

Together, NKFM and T&Co. designed a collaborative, data-informed, and inclusive strategic planning process. Over several months, leadership participated in facilitated planning sessions, strategic discussions, and visioning exercises to identify future priorities. The process also incorporated organizational assessments, Board and staff feedback, and an examination of external trends and opportunities to ensure the plan reflects both current realities and future aspirations.

Appendix A includes a roster of participants who engaged in these activities, and Appendices B–F summarize activity results.



Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan



MISSION

To prevent kidney disease and improve the quality of life for those living with it.



VISION

Healthy communities where all people achieve their greatest quality of life.



2026-2031 STRATEGIC PLAN

The strategic plan identifies overarching goals and objectives that focus NKFM's efforts over the next five years. A goal is a broad, long-term statement that articulates a desirable outcome. An objective is a measurable action that can be implemented through intentional strategies and tactics to achieve the overall goal. Possible measures of success are included to track success year after year.

Through the strategic planning process, NKFM stakeholders identified five goals for the organization, with each goal complemented by objectives that describe how that goal will be achieved.

Goal One

Support people living with and at risk of kidney disease across Michigan through NKFM programs and services.



Goal One

Objective One

Strengthen community outreach and engagement to understand the needs and experiences of people living with and at risk for kidney disease by 2031.

Strategies

- Elevate community outreach and engagement.
- Listen directly to understand the needs of people living with and at risk for kidney disease.
- Build ongoing feedback mechanisms to ensure community voices inform decision-making.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Number of surveys completed.
- Number of listening sessions held.
- Number of implementation plans developed based on surveys and listening sessions.

Goal One

Objective Two

Expand and deliver intentional, person-centered programs and services that respond to identified community needs by 2031.

Strategies

- Align programs with real community needs, not just funder priorities.
- Meet people where they are by providing solutions tailored to their specific needs and circumstances.
- Grow person-centered services, screening, and support.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Number of programs/services directly linked to priorities identified through community assessments.
- Number of community screening events held.
- Number of persons served by programming.
- Number of community reports created and released.

Goal Two

Elevate NKFM's reputation as an integrated partner in public health, the community, and healthcare across Michigan.



Goal Two

Objective One

Deepen and expand healthcare partnerships to achieve system-level impact by 2031.

Strategies

- Assess and identify current healthcare partnership gaps and alignment to increase the number of mission-supportive healthcare partnerships.
- Engage potential healthcare partners and identify mutual strategic initiatives.
- Support improved quality of life for people at all stages of kidney disease.
- Increase the early detection and diagnosis of kidney disease through screening.
- Increase referrals to NKFM.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Development of plans to engage current and new partners.
- Number of partners tracking chronic kidney disease (CKD) screening rates and CKD diagnosis rates.
- Number of partners referring to NKFM programs/services.
- Number of partner meetings held.
- Number of partners participating in or sponsoring NKFM events.
- Number of new partners engaged.
- Overall decrease in incidence of kidney failure in Michigan.

Goal Two

Objective Two

By 2023, develop partnerships where people live, work, learn, worship, and play to reach and support individuals across their lifespan who have or are at risk for chronic kidney disease.

Strategies

- Identify current community partnership gaps and increase the number of mission-supportive community partnerships.
- Work directly with partner agencies to foster shared understanding and common goals for addressing local needs.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Number of partnerships formed.
- Number of community conversations held.



Goal Two

Objective Three

Reduce community-specific barriers within NKFM's scope of influence and implement tailored approaches to address social drivers of health by 2031.

Strategies

- Assess community-specific barriers, including upstream health factors.
- Identify and/or develop tailored approaches to address community specific barriers.
- Ensure services are inclusive and accessible.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Number of tailored approaches implemented.
- Number of barriers addressed and reduced.

Goal Three

Position the NKFM as a trusted leader in kidney health by raising awareness, expanding its reach, and helping more people.



Goal Three

Objective One

Increase NKFM's visibility across the state by 2031.

Strategies

- Expand marketing of the NKFM brand.
- Consistently and creatively promote the NKFM's work and impact.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Percentage of website traffic growth.
- Percentage of increase in social media followers and reach.
- Number of stories told through social, digital, and traditional media.



Objective Two

Increase awareness of kidney disease by 2031.

Strategies

- Educate key audiences on kidney health and its impacts on whole-body wellness.
- Grow the “Are You the 33%?” Campaign.
- Increase NKFM’s community visibility and face-to-face presence.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Number of educational programs, webinars, workshops, and presentations conducted.
- Number of participants reached through educational activities.
- Number of “Are You the 33%?” Campaign quiz completions.
- Number of staff who link those served through programs/events/services to the communications team.

Goal Three

Objective Three

Proactively use data to develop and share compelling stories that demonstrate impact and return on investment by 2031.

Strategies

- Assess current data assets and identify gaps.
- Use data proactively to identify areas of greatest community need.
- Use data to support decisions around NKFM's infrastructure, programming, and services.
- Use data to demonstrate outcomes and the return on investment of the NKFM's work.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Completion of a comprehensive data inventory.
- Inclusion of additional years of data in CKD dashboard.
- Completion of CKD management–related Medicaid data analysis.
- Establishment and documentation of methodology to determine return on investment of NKFM's work.
- Establishment of CKD cost framework.
- Number of data gaps identified and documented.
- Number of community needs assessments completed.
- Number of services improved, expanded, or discontinued based on data findings.
- Number of stakeholders who received impact reports.

Goal Four

Secure significant, sustainable, and diverse funding to support the successful fulfillment of the NKFM's mission.



Goal Four

Objective One

Increase NKFM's nongovernment-funded budget by 30 percent through new nongovernment funding by 2031.

Strategies

- Increase planned giving and major gifts.
- Grow NKFM's Healthy Futures Endowment.
- Secure foundation and other private funding to demonstrate collective impact.
- Explore corporate funding opportunities.
- Expand relationships with high-level corporate, healthcare, and community partners.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Number of planned giving prospects identified.
- Number of planned giving commitments secured.
- Number of major donor cultivation meetings conducted.
- Percentage of growth in planned giving pipeline value.
- Percentage of increase in major gift revenue generated annually.
- Number of impact stories developed annually.
- Number of storytelling campaigns executed.
- Number of donor appeals that incorporate impact stories.
- Number of social fundraising campaigns launched.
- Percentage of revenue generated through social media channels.
- Number of online donors acquired.

Goal Four

Objective Two

Secure a 10 percent increase in state and federal funding by 2031.

Strategies

- Secure $1 million with a 90/10 match ($8 million) in ongoing Medicaid budget funding from the State of Michigan during fiscal years 2027–2028.
- Increase state and federal funds when grant opportunities arise.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- $8 million secured in ongoing funding.
- Number of grants awarded.



Goal Five

Ensure staff members have the resources to innovate and advance the NKFM's mission and serve its communities.



Objective One

Create a workplace culture and organizational structure that increases collaboration across the NKFM.

Strategies

- Assess staffing and organizational structure to identify gaps in collaboration.
- Organize staff in alignment with all NKFM programs, services, and departments to increase collaboration.
- Create opportunities for connection and a shared vision.
- Ensure implementation is tied to NKFM's guiding principles and The Collaborative Way® model.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Number of collaboration gaps identified and documented.
- Number of all-staff meetings, retreats, and team-building activities held.
- Rate of participation in organization-wide events.
- Completion of staff roles alignment with strategic priorities.
- Rate of increase in cross-departmental initiatives and projects.
- Employee engagement survey scores.
- Incorporation of guiding principles into annual work plans and performance reviews.

Objective Two

Establish a comprehensive staffing plan aligned with NKFM's strategic priorities and organizational goals by 2031.

Strategies

- Assess and address staffing needs, role alignment, and skill gaps across the organization by 2027.
- Create a professional development plan that focuses on staff skills and culture.
- Complete succession planning.
- Invest in professional development (e.g., certifications and continuing education).

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Completion of organization-wide staffing and skills assessment.
- Number of skill gaps identified and documented.
- Completion of the workforce development plan by 2027.
- Completion of the professional development framework.
- Level of staff confidence in discussing kidney disease and NKFM programs and services.

Objective Three

Develop and implement a data, systems, and IT plan to increase operational efficiency and enhance security by 2031.

Strategies

- Create an operational strategy that outlines data, systems, and IT initiatives to improve NKFM's security position.
- Continue to assess cyber threats.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Completion and approval of the operational and technology strategy.
- Completion of current database environment assessment.
- Completion of IT staffing needs assessment.
- Annual completion of cybersecurity risk assessments.



Appendix A & B

APPENDIX A

NKFM Strategic Planning Participants

Adam Russell, Senior Program Manager
Ann Andrews, Senior Program Manager
Arlene Guindon, Senior Program Manager
Charlene Cole, Vice President
Crystal D'Agostino, Director of Policy and Programs
Daniel Carney, President and CEO Emeritus
Emily Tuesday, Tuesday & Co.
Erin Lammers, Tuesday & Co.
Linda Smith-Wheelock, President and CEO
Lisa Schutz Jelic, Director of Development
Marcie Gerlach, Senior Communications Manager
Monique Lee, Director of Employee Experience
Paul S. Metta, Vice President of Finance
Val Cobbs, Senior Regional Manager

APPENDIX B

Current Environment

T&Co. reviewed relevant NKFM organizational materials to develop a strong understanding of NKFM's programs, advocacy work, partnerships, and current strategic position. The following list outlines these materials. Bolded titles indicate where T&Co. shared relevant takeaways with NKFM staff during the first facilitated planning session.

- **NKFM Strategic Plan, 2022–2025**
- **NKFM/MDHHS Kidney Disease Strategy and Action Plan, 2026–2031**
- **Interim Priorities**
- **Board Input Summary**
- NKFM Mission, Purpose, Vision, and Guiding Principle
- Article: What Is The Collaborative Way®?

Appendix C

APPENDIX C

Staff Survey

The staff survey below was released on Monday, March 9, 2026, and closed on Sunday, March 22, 2026. The survey was a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions and received 54 submissions.

Introduction
Thank you for taking this survey. There are 13 questions and it should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Please submit your responses by Sunday, March 22, 2026.

NKFM is currently engaging in a strategic planning process to guide its work over the next five years. As a staff member, your perspective is essential. You bring direct experience with our programs, partners, and internal operations, and your insights will help shape NKFM's future direction and priorities.

We encourage you to provide candid, thoughtful feedback. There are no right or wrong answers.

Your responses are completely anonymous unless you choose to share your email address for follow-up. Individual responses will remain confidential and will only be reported in aggregate form.

Thank you for your time and for the important work you do each day.

Section 1: About You
How long have you been employed by NKFM?

- Less than 1 year
- 1–2 years
- 3–5 years
- 6–10 years
- More than 10 years

We know that NKFM has many staff members with lived experience of kidney disease. Do you have lived experience?

Appendix C

- Yes
- No

Section 2: Strategic Direction and Alignment
NKFM's mission is to prevent kidney disease and improve the quality of life for those living with it.

How clear is NKFM's overall strategic direction today?
- 1 – Not clear at all
- 2 – Slightly clear
- 3 – Moderately clear
- 4 – Mostly clear
- 5 – Very clear

What contributes most to this level of clarity or lack of clarity? (Open response)
How aligned do you feel your day-to-day work is with NKFM's mission and strategic priorities?
- 1 – Not aligned at all
- 2 – Slightly aligned
- 3 – Moderately aligned
- 4 – Mostly aligned
- 5 – Very aligned

What would help improve alignment between your work and NKFM's mission and priorities?
- (Open response)

Section 3: Strengths and Challenges
What are NKFM's three greatest strengths as an organization?
- (Open response)
- (Open response)
- (Open response)

What are the three biggest challenges that limit NKFM's effectiveness?
- (Open response)
- (Open response)
- (Open response)

Appendix C & D

Section 4: Opportunities and Future Priorities
NKFM's strategic priorities are prevention, patient services, and fundraising. Where do you see the greatest opportunities for NKFM to increase its impact over the next 5 years?

- (Open response)

Where should NKFM focus less time or fewer resources?

- (Open response)

Section 5: Programs, Operations, and Organizational Effectiveness
If you could change or improve one aspect of NKFM's programs, services, or operations, what would it be?

- (Open response)

Is there anything else you want leadership to consider during strategic planning?

- (Open response)

If you'd like leadership to follow-up on any of your answers, please share your email.

- (Optional, open response)

Closing
Thank you very much for your time and participation in this survey. The NKFM leadership team and board of directors greatly appreciate your support and input!

APPENDIX D

Visioning Exercise

During the first strategic planning session, participants were asked to envision an ideal future for NKFM. Participants' responses centered around the following topics and ideas:

- NKFM staff and administration are thriving, collaborative, and aligned.
- NKFM remains deeply committed to its mission and is a trusted leader in the community.
- NKFM excels at marketing, storytelling, and communicating its impact.

Appendix E

APPENDIX E

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

During session one, NKFM's leadership team completed a SWOT analysis. This exercise identified internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats that could impact NKFM's ability to achieve its mission and more effectively prevent and address kidney disease for Michiganders. The SWOT analysis was used during session two to develop relevant, impactful goals and objectives, creating the framework for the strategic plan.

Strengths

- Strong partnership and aligned vision with MDHHS
- Talented, committed staff and engaged board of directors
- Recognized as a subject matter expert by external organizations
- Established infrastructure for Medicaid and Medicare billing, including a functioning claims system
- Comprehensive, user-friendly website with growing utilization
- Trusted, neutral convener with strong relationships across stakeholders

Weaknesses

- Limited funding diversification and reliance on key funding sources
- Inability to secure a consistent, ongoing MDHHS funding line
- Organizational silos across departments impacting collaboration and efficiency
- Limited internal IT capacity and difficulty adapting quickly to new technology

Opportunities

- Strategic partnerships with aligned organizations and systems
- Untapped major gift potential
- Enhanced marketing and storytelling to support fundraising and awareness.
- NKFM's reputation as a trusted, unbiased, and neutral expert and convener
- Increased staff buy-in and ability to develop relationships
- Growing digital engagement and potential to further leverage the website as a resource hub

Threats

- Uncertainty in the political and funding environment
- Risk of cyberattacks and data security vulnerabilities
- Potential loss or reduction of key funding streams
- Shortage of nephrologists and primary care providers impacting access to care
- Systemic barriers preventing individuals from accessing needed care

Appendix F

APPENDIX E

Implementation Template

NKFM 2026–2031 Strategic Plan
Objectives, Activities, and Staff Leads

Goal:

Objective:

Owner	Consulted	Approver

Strategy:

Activities		Complete By	Person Responsible
Partners	**Measures of Success**	**Budget and Resources**	



NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION®

of Michigan