

JUNIPER OUTREACH FOUNDATION 2026 – 2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

MESSAGE FROM JUNIPER OUTREACH FOUNDATION

In 2019 a first grader at Elm Park School told Julie McDonald, a volunteer, that she was hungry. Julie gave the student a granola bar from her purse. The next time she saw Julie, she was thrilled that Julie had another granola bar for her. This simple interaction – followed by discussions with school staff about the prevalence and impact of hunger at Elm Park School – moved Julie to action. Julie developed and vetted a vision for a school-based food pantry, accessible to students who needed food and toiletries at home. Creating the pantry was put on pause by the pandemic. While schools operated remotely, Julie pivoted, and supported by a cadre of volunteers, organized food and clothing drives for students in need. The Juniper Outreach Foundation was formed as a 501(c)3 in 2020 and opened its first pantry opened at the Lincoln Street School in 2022 Juniper has expanded and currently operates eight school-based food pantries in Worcester public schools.

As the number of students facing food insecurity grows, so does Juniper’s commitment. In 2025 the Board of Directors initiated a strategic planning process to thoughtfully set a path for Juniper. This strategic plan includes a revised mission and vision statement, values, and three strategic imperatives to ensure that Juniper can effectively meet the needs of students facing food insecurity.

Juniper is grateful to our donors, grantors, volunteers, school administrators, and school staff. We’re proud to work with all of you to operate a meaningful support system for hundreds of students.

JUNIPER OUTREACH FOUNDATION

2026 – 2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION

The Juniper Outreach Foundation operates school-based food pantries for students facing food insecurity at home.

A simple but powerful interaction between a hungry first-grade student and a school volunteer led to the formation of Juniper Outreach Foundation. Julie McDonald, Juniper's founder, recognized that some students didn't have access to food and toiletries at night and on weekends. During the pandemic, Juniper volunteers organized food, blanket, and clothing drives to support Worcester Public School students and in April 2022, opened its first school-based pantry at the Lincoln Street School. Since 2022, Juniper has expanded to eight schools, opening its most recent pantries at Doherty High School and Vernon Hill School in 2025.

Juniper pantries provide students facing food insecurity with access to food and toiletries that they can bring home for nights, weekends, and school vacations. Juniper stocks shelf-stable items including meals that are easy to prepare. Inventory includes packaged meals, snacks, pantry items (ex: pasta, beans, sauce), and toiletries (ex: toothpaste, soap, feminine products). A committed group of volunteers manages the acquisition and distribution of pantry items and keeps the inventory organized in dedicated spaces at each school. Student access to the pantries is managed by school administrators, based on student/family need.

JUNIPER OUTREACH FOUNDATION

2026 – 2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION

The Juniper Outreach Foundation will support more students by opening and operating food pantries in more schools in Massachusetts. Juniper will measure utilization and impact to ensure the fulfillment of the mission and to inspire donor investment.

Operating food pantries in eight schools in Worcester is impactful - but it isn't enough. Every year, more students in more schools lack access to food and toiletries at home. Juniper is committed to expanding in a way that meets increasing needs and ensures meaningful impact.

Many students served by Juniper pantries are eligible for breakfast and lunch at school but are at risk of going without meals during evenings and weekends. Access to hot meals is even more complicated for students who are unhoused. To meet student needs, Juniper maintains inventories of non-perishable food items with a focus on culturally appropriate choices. Pantries also stock basic toiletry items such as soap, toothpaste, and feminine products. Feminine products are provided to Juniper through a partnership with another grassroots organization, Dignity Matters.

- **INCREASING NEED:** Several sources have quantified the increase in food insecurity locally, across the state, and nationally. The Worcester County Food Bank (WCFB) reported that 1 in 7 children in Worcester County lack sufficient healthy food and the number of families seeking access to food in

JUNIPER OUTREACH FOUNDATION 2026 – 2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 increased by 32% as compared to 2023. Statewide, 37% of Massachusetts households reported food insecurity, up from 19% five years earlier.

- **MEANINGFUL IMPACT:** Food insecurity impacts students while they are in and outside of school. Several research studies that assess health, hunger and academics cite the following impacts:
 - Performance – Chronically hungry students tend to have lower grades and test scores.
 - Graduation – Food insecure students are less likely to graduate high school.
 - Attendance – Food insecurity can lead to more absences and tardiness.
 - Emotional and Social Capabilities – Food insecurity can lead to school-related setbacks, social isolation, and challenges outside of school.

JUNIPER OUTREACH FOUNDATION

2026 – 2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

VALUES

The Juniper Outreach Foundation is committed to treating our students, school partners, vendors, volunteers, funders, and each other with compassion, dignity, and respect.

- **Compassion** – We lead with empathy and kindness, recognizing that every person’s story is unique. Our work is rooted in understanding and responding to challenges that students and their families face. Juniper supports students with care, compassion, and humanity.
- **Dignity** – We believe that access to food and toiletries are a right, not a privilege. Every interaction - with students, volunteers, community and school partners - reflects our commitment to each person’s dignity. Juniper recognizes every student’s sense of pride and belonging.
- **Respect** – We value the opinions, time, and contribution of everyone we work with and serve. Juniper listens, collaborates, and communicates openly, building trust through accountability and genuine respect for one another.

JUNIPER OUTREACH FOUNDATION

2026 – 2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

2026 – 2028 STRATEGY

The Juniper Outreach Foundation will increase its impact by building a sustainable infrastructure, opening pantries in more schools, and maintaining a focus on quality.

To support the mission and achieve the vision, Juniper will focus on three strategic imperatives from 2026 – 2028. The three imperatives are to:

1. Build an infrastructure that strengthens operations and ensures sustainability.
2. Open more pantries in more schools to support more students.
3. Engage with experts to ensure quality and meaningful impact.

Juniper volunteers, staff, and board members – with the support of donors, partners, and school staff are critical to execution of the strategy.

JUNIPER OUTREACH FOUNDATION

2026 – 2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

Imperative: Build An Infrastructure

Since its inception, Juniper has operated based on the unwavering commitment of its founder, board, and volunteers. The effort to acquire and distribute inventory grows with each pantry that Juniper opens and operates. Further expansion is dependent upon the implementation of a sound infrastructure including standard operating procedures, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, pantry costs, and development of strategic partnerships to improve acquisition and distribution of inventory.

The 2026 goals associated with building an infrastructure are:

1. Identify and implement improvements in existing operations.
2. Build a playbook for operations including:
 - a. Standard operating procedures for inventory management
 - b. Standard operating procedures for pantry operations
 - c. Clearly defined roles and expectations for all stakeholders including school administrators, teachers and staff, Juniper volunteers and staff, students, and funders
3. Build a cost model for new pantry installation and operations.
4. Research and prioritize strategic partnerships to optimize acquisition and distribution of pantry items.
5. Define operating and governance models and funding levels required to support Juniper in the long term.

JUNIPER OUTREACH FOUNDATION

2026 – 2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

Imperative: Support More Students

In 2025, Juniper supported approximately 1,000 students. With food insecurity increasing school administrators have articulated the need for more school-based food pantries. Juniper will support more students by opening pantries in schools with highest need and in alignment with Juniper’s capabilities.

The 2026 goals associated with supporting more students are:

1. Secure 2026 revenue of \$300,000 from donations and grants, including at least 2 multi-year donations.
2. Build a three-year timeline for expansion based on school demographics and consistent with Juniper’s capabilities.
3. Set target revenue for 2027 and 2028 based upon expansion timeline.
4. Develop and deliver at least 2 pitches for companies to fund and support a school-based pantry.

JUNIPER OUTREACH FOUNDATION

2026 – 2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

Imperative: Ensure Quality and Meaningful Impact

Juniper continually applies learnings based on experience and feedback but recognizes the value of fresh perspectives. Accordingly, Juniper will engage with subject matter experts to provide input on several dimensions – community need, nutrition, and quality.

The 2026 goals associated with ensuring quality are:

1. Develop a methodology to incorporate community feedback to ensure alignment of services with community needs.
2. Solicit input from nutrition experts to evaluate inventory and identify alternative items.
3. Develop measures to monitor quality and ensure Juniper has a meaningful impact on students served.