



Inland Seas

EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Strategic Plan 2021 - 2025

The **MISSION** of ISEA is to inspire a lifetime of Great Lakes curiosity, stewardship, and passion in people of all ages.

Our **VISION** is to foster Great Lakes resiliency for future generations through educational experiences. We **VALUE**:

Stewardship – We possess an ethic of caring for and protecting the essential functions of the Great Lakes as a vital resource to the surrounding ecosystem and encourage others to do the same.

Education – We provide meaningful educational experiences that inspire hope, enjoyment, and a lifetime commitment to the resiliency of the Great Lakes.

Diversity – We embrace a diversity of races, cultures, abilities, ages, beliefs, sexual identities, and genders as we build our community of volunteers, students, clients, donors, and staff. We strive to increase the representation within our community.

Integrity – We are a team committed to the ideals of honesty, transparency, and accountability in all our behaviors and relationships. A high degree of trust and inclusiveness is the foundation for all that we do.

Background

This strategic plan is being developed during a pivotal time in the history of ISEA. The organization achieved our previous strategic goals with a high level of success. Those goals were focused around the theme of sustainability as the organization was in the midst of a transition from its founder. With a steadfast commitment to the idea of organizational sustainability, ISEA:

- Increased organizational funding, doubling both the annual total revenue and organizational net assets in this time frame.
- Steadily increased the number and variety of programs delivered and participants reached.
- Increased the number of hours that volunteers provide in service to the organization.
- Steadily increased the quantity and nature of strategic organizational partnerships strengthening the organization's level of professionalism, reach, connection to current Great Lakes topics of interest, and overall effectiveness.
- Paid off all organizational debt.
- Completed a campus-wide renovation honoring ISEA's late founder, creating the Capt. Thomas M. Kelly Biological Station.

This strategic plan is built on these successes and fully utilizes the investments made to the campus and facility. We anticipate a broad range of new programming that will be offered during the non-sailing season from our newly renovated campus and facility. These new programs will broaden the scope and depth of the ISEA mission by expanding our time-tested Great Lakes stewardship education programs from six to twelve months annually.

However, the need to fully utilize organizational assets is occurring simultaneously with a global pandemic. Therefore, the goals and objectives reflected within this plan have been built with the assumption that our ability to work with our primary K-12 audience will be impacted negatively for several years. We also anticipate an extended period of economic uncertainty which could impact charitable giving as well as programmatic funding.

The strong foundation ISEA enjoys today was built upon our Schoolship program. As we turn our attention towards this new plan and the next phase of ISEA, the connecting theme of Beyond Schoolship rises to the surface. Make no mistake, ISEA is not looking away from Schoolship, but rather we are focusing on a firm foundation in Schoolship as we look beyond.

Goal #1

Ship-Based Programming

By 2026, *SV Inland Seas* and *SV Alliance* will attain 210 scheduled sailing days (75% capacity of the 280 possible sailing days between both vessels) with diverse programming to reach the following strategic audience targets.

Objectives:

1. Maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the K-12 Schoolship experience making room for year-round program objectives
2. Increase Schoolship program demand in response to anticipated impacts of the addition of *S/V Alliance* and conducting Schoolship in Detroit
3. Increase recruitment efforts of a more diverse program audience to increase the number of historically underrepresented students working in fields related to the stewardship of the Great Lakes
4. Strengthen college and university-level collaboration
5. Strengthen Great Lakes-related state and federal agency collaboration

Goal #2

Year-Round Programming and Campus Utilization

By 2026, ISEA will fully utilize its shoreside assets by increasing the number of mission-related day and overnight events hosted on ISEA TMKBS and nearby Discovery Pier. Watershed Exploration programs will increase by 33% from around 54 events in 2022 to 71 events in 2025.

Objectives:

1. Develop, implement, and evaluate a range of STEM-based programming capable of being delivered from the ISEA campus and facility on a year-round basis.
2. Increase the use of ISEA's dorm space on a year-round basis.
3. Develop opportunities for Great Lakes researchers, higher educational personnel, and Great Lakes-related agencies and organizations to conduct research and provide education and outreach from the ISEA Biological Station and campus.
4. Provide fully funded professional development opportunities for educators.
5. Engage key stakeholders in the independent use and exploration of our campus, facilities, tools, and exhibits.

Goal #3 Volunteers

Through the development and retention of a respected, engaged, and continuous learning community of volunteers, ISEA will meet the organization's 2026 programmatic, administrative, and maintenance needs.

Objectives:

1. Create a safe working environment for volunteers during the pandemic.
2. Build relationships with and between volunteers to create a rich sense of community.
3. Increase the volunteer pool to meet programmatic needs.
4. Develop internal systems that prevent division in dual ship culture/volunteers.
5. Engage volunteers in a variety of events to provide continuous learning opportunities.
6. Increase volunteer retention.

Goal #4 Fundraising

Over the next 5 years, ISEA will grow and diversify key organizational funding streams to increase revenue to develop and sustain two vessels and year-round programming.

Objectives:

1. Develop and execute an annual giving strategy to help exceed organizational operating, capital, and program funding needs.
2. Expand our major gift program.
3. Increase support from foundation grant funding by 10% annually.
4. Create structure and capacity to execute a successful \$10.6M capital campaign.
5. Grow our planned giving program.
6. Increase program fee revenue.

Goal #5

Public Relations/Marketing

By 2026, ISEA will increase the communication and engagement of the strategic community of clients, volunteers, donors, corporate supporters, media, and staff to keep people inspired by and active in our work.

Objectives:

1. Recruit and engage participants to use our programs or services so that the percentage goals set forth in Goal #1 are achieved.
2. Recruit and engage volunteers to help deliver our programs and services.
3. Recruit and engage individuals, foundations, and corporations that support the organization financially.
4. Develop and revise consistent paths to report and showcase science data and educational materials.
5. Increase traffic to website.
6. Increase social media followers by 5% each year.
7. Increase newsletter open rate to 40% consistently.
8. Expand relationships with federal, state, and local officials to support ISEA's mission and initiatives.

Goal #6

Board of Directors

The majority of current ISEA Board members are serving an extended term. As a result, a high board turnover is anticipated during the period covered by this strategic plan.

Objectives:

1. Enhance the reputation of ISEA as a steward of the Great Lakes by seeking opportunities to strategically engage with economic, social, and environmental stakeholders using a balanced approach.
2. Annually, improve underserved youth participation in ISEA programming.
3. Encourage staff participation and collaboration in Board meetings.
4. Review and recruit diverse individuals to enhance organization needs.
5. Provide the resources and overall support necessary to assure the completion of the five-year strategic program plan.
6. Review and refresh the current ISEA Strategic Plan annually.
7. Devote a portion of selected Board meetings to continuous Board member professional development as outlined in the Board Member handbook.