



Nureen Organizational Manifesto

Creating free Islamic digital tools, rooted in community, built with integrity, and guided by Islamic values.

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Foreword from the Founder

I wrote this manifesto based on how we work together day-to-day at Nureen. It will evolve as we grow, insha'Allah, ensuring that it remains true to who we are and how we work. The manifesto helps new team members familiarize themselves with Nureen's culture, values, and work ethic.

The concepts described in this manifesto are informed by best practices in organizational development, design processes, and communication. Several books have shaped my understanding of these topics and are listed below for further reading:

Essen, Ingrid van. *Communicatie Zonder Frustratie in Het Onderwijs: Versterk de Relatie met je Leerling, je Collega en Jezelf* [Communication Without Frustration in Education: Strengthen the Relationship with Your Student, Your Colleague, and Yourself]. First edition, Lannoo Campus, 2019.

Kramer, Jitske. *Deep Democracy: De wijsheid van de minderheid* [Deep Democracy: The Wisdom of the Minority]. Management Impact, 2019.

Laloux, Frédéric. *Reinventing Organizations: An Illustrated Invitation to Join the Conversation on Next-Stage Organizations*. Illustrated by Etienne Appert, First edition, 2016.

Schell, Jesse. *The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses*. CRC Press/Balkema, 2008.

In keeping with Nureen's standard practice, this manifesto was reviewed and refined with the help of Naziha, an expert in organizational development and leadership from lead-inspire.be.

1. Our Vision

Nureen is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating free, high-quality Islamic apps, games, and digital content for Muslims worldwide. We believe that technology can serve as a tool for spiritual growth, learning, and community connection when built with integrity, creativity, and purpose.

We exist because the Muslim community deserves digital tools created *for* them, *with* them, and rooted in Islamic values. Our apps act as a *sadaqah jariyah*, continuing acts of charity that benefit generations to come.

2. Why We Organize Differently

We have chosen a path grounded in three **Islamic** principles: **Iḥsān** (Excellence & Integrity), **Shūrā** (Seek the wisdom of your network), and **Tawakkul** (Trusting Allah's Plan, Embracing Flexibility).

Frederic Laloux's research on self-managing organizations reveals why this works: when people have autonomy and actively seek advice and feedback, when their whole selves are welcomed, and when organizations remain responsive, energy and excellence flourish. Organizations like Buurtzorg (which grew from a small team in 2006 to 850 flourishing teams) prove this is possible. We are building Nureen on this foundation by returning to Islamic principles and discovering their organizational power.

3. Our Three Core Principles

3.1 Iḥsān: Excellence & Integrity

We give our best selves, leverage our strengths, learn continuously, and offer our work as ongoing charity to Allah and the ummah.

Iḥsān means to act with excellence and integrity in all things. It is the commitment to do our work beautifully, thoughtfully, and with sincere intention.

In practice, this means:

We pursue excellence together. Each team member brings their full capability and strives to improve. We learn continuously from our work, from each other, and from the communities we serve. Mistakes are invitations to deepen our craft.

We dedicate this work to Allah and the Ummah. This clarity of intention protects us from ego and the endless chase for external validation. When your work is sadaqah (charity) you work both humble and confident.

We bring wholeness to our work. Your spirituality, emotion, creativity, logic, and intuition are all valued here. We create a safe environment where you can be yourself. When you bring your whole self, you contribute with authenticity and depth.

We approach struggles as opportunities. When someone or the team is overwhelmed, stuck, or struggling, we see it as pointing to something deeper. Together, we explore what's underneath so they and their team can return to their best self.

We take responsibility for our work and commitments. When you commit to a task or deadline, we take that commitment seriously and expect you to start working on it in a timely manner. If you encounter a roadblock, we ask that you first think through the

issue independently and try a few possible solutions before asking for help.

Communicate early if you get stuck so we can help you find solutions.

Ihsān requires both excellence in our craft *and* excellence in our word. Both matter equally.

3.2 Shūrā: Embrace the wisdom of your network

While working with confidence and autonomy, we regularly review our work with experts and testers and consult one another in decisions.

Shura means consultation, seeking wisdom from one another so we can give our best to shared work.

As Nureen grows, we envision it consisting of self-managing teams of volunteers and working professionals. Each team works on a specific app, game, or creative project and has a clear structure and workflow to enable coordination and cooperation. Importantly, teams have the autonomy to make decisions about their work while maintaining a culture of seeking advice on significant choices and seeking feedback at developmental milestones.

When a team member faces a major decision they actively seek input from colleagues, from other teams, and from the broader Nureen community. This advice-seeking process strengthens our work and builds genuine collaboration. Wisdom emerges from listening to one another. We involve the Muslim community in building these tools whenever possible, because the best solutions come from those who will use them.

Shūrā also means being open to feedback, advice, and correction. We are often blind to our own faults or to missed opportunities, and it takes courage for someone to reach out and tell us. Thank them and learn from them. We are all human, and learning is part of the path to becoming the best versions of ourselves. Sometimes a task that has been worked on no longer serves us. While this work may be removed from the app or game, it remains experience and knowledge, a stepping stone to greater work.

3.3 Tawakkul & Flexibility

We seek Allah's guidance and trust in His unfolding plan. By doing so we remain flexible, listening to feedback, and welcoming the possibilities new people bring to the organization.

Tawakkul means trusting in Allah's plan while doing our part with sincere effort. It is the balance between thoughtful action and surrender, between planning and remaining open to what emerges.

In practice, this means:

We practice istikhara organizationally. In Islam, we seek guidance (istikhara) and trust Allah while we do the work (tawakkul). We apply this at Nureen: we reflect carefully on decisions, we act with clear intention, we remain open to feedback, and we trust that our sincere effort, combined with Allah's guidance, will unfold as it should.

We plan thoughtfully, then remain agile and flexible. Nureen stays responsive to signals from within our organization and from the communities we serve. We listen, we adjust priorities based on what we learn, and we welcome change when wisdom calls for it.

Your voice as a newcomer matters deeply. Fresh perspectives often see what we have stopped noticing. Your ideas, questions, and observations help us improve and find direction.

We welcome the possibilities new people bring. Each person who joins us carries gifts we did not expect. We remain curious and open, trusting that their arrival is part of Allah's unfolding plan for Nureen.

4. How We Work Together

4.1 Safety and Belonging

We cannot do our best work in fear. At Nureen, we are committed to:

- **Psychological safety:** You can speak up, ask questions, admit mistakes, and share ideas. Everyone matters, and every voice counts within the organization. We therefore actively work to maintain trust and create an environment where people feel comfortable asking questions, learning from one another, and continuing to grow together.
- **Authentic presence:** With us, you can be yourself. Different ways of thinking such as neurodiversity, different communication styles, and different approaches to problem-solving are assets.
- **Trust-based culture:** We assume good intent and we operate from a foundation of trust.

4.3 Conflict and Repair

Disagreements and differences of opinion are normal and valuable, they help us think more clearly. When conflict arises, our priority is repair: returning to a foundation of trust and security with one another.

This requires courage, the courage to express concerns constructively and the willingness to listen with an open heart. Sometimes this is difficult to do alone. That is what colleagues are for. We support one another in this and give dedicated time for it.

4.4 Feedback and Growth

We give and receive feedback because we care about each other's growth and our collective excellence. Feedback is an act of love that nourishes both personal and organizational growth.

Giving Feedback

Giving constructive feedback can be uncomfortable as you may worry that it will trigger defensiveness, sting, or derail someone's work. You are right to be thoughtful about it. Feedback might mean they need to backtrack hours of work or invest additional effort. It can also be hard for someone to see your perspective and truly make it their own.

Because feedback feels so sensitive, many people avoid it altogether. This hinders the quality of our apps and creates distance between team members. Yet in our experience, people are often far more open to receiving feedback than you would expect, especially when it's delivered with genuine care. We have the following 6 tips for giving feedback.

1. **Check your niyah (intention).** Are you offering feedback to help someone grow and improve? Lead with that purpose.
2. **Frame it thoughtfully.** A proven approach is to open with something specific you appreciate, name one or two areas for improvement, then close with another positive observation.
3. **Choose your focus.** If the person did not ask for feedback or you sense resistance, limit yourself to the three most important points. Make a list first and prioritize.
4. **Separate the work from the person.** Direct critical feedback at the task or behaviour, never at the person. When discussing behaviour, explain how it affected you and what you'd have preferred instead.
5. **Be specific.** Instead of "your art looks beautiful," try "I really like the color choice here, it makes the whole piece feel radiant." Specificity shows you've truly considered their work.
6. **Give space.** Don't expect immediate agreement or gratitude. Even experienced people can feel defensive or overwhelmed, especially with significant feedback. Keep it brief and resist the urge to repeat yourself as that often deepens the sting. Trust that what you've said will eventually land.

Receiving Feedback in the Agile work form:

Receiving feedback can be very difficult for many people as we hope to get praised on our work and communication style. Even so, mistakes teach us much more than success, and at Nureen, learning and continuous improvement is key.

The Feedback Process:

- 1. Screen your idea first.** Before seeking feedback, think about the potential risks and problems in your idea on your own. Use the eight questions from section 5.3 for an initial screening. Try to improve the idea yourself until you are satisfied with it, without working out all the details. Prepare a simple written or visual presentation to show others and gather feedback.
- 2. Stay open to change.** Do not become attached to an idea that has not been rigorously tested. Be mentally prepared to discard an idea or change it significantly after the feedback phase. In the end, ideas are cheap to generate, while production costs are expensive. We therefore need to filter the ideas and keep only those with the best chance of success.
- 3. Seek critical and balanced feedback.** Discuss the idea with relevant people to get critical feedback. Look for honest feedback and ask questions to get as much input as possible. Also ask what they like about the idea, so you can identify which aspects are working and would be worth keeping. It can help to give people time to reflect on your work, while at other times you may want to observe their reaction in person.
- 4. Look for patterns in the feedback.** Collect feedback from different people and consider what it means for you. How has your understanding of the problem grown and developed based on this feedback? Keep in mind that opinions may differ and that your own view may not be typical of your audience.
- 5. Refine the idea.** Take a step back and think about how you can adapt your idea or add details to make it better suited to the situation. Sometimes the idea itself is fine but needs some refinement.
- 6. Repeat the process.** Share the new concept with the people you asked for feedback and repeat the process.
- 7. Test risks before development.** Before moving on to actual development, review the potential risks that could arise. Create simple prototypes and test these risks. You do not want to create something only to discover that it is not technologically feasible or would drain the budget.

4.5 Take Ownership

If you commit to Nureen's work, we expect you to take real responsibility for your role. This means:

Own your work: Take leadership on what you've committed to.

Agile approach: Create a first version quickly and share the concept without perfecting every detail right away. Once you have received feedback and approval, refine it further. Expect to improve your work several times before it is final; that is how we build quality step by step.

Communicate proactively: Let us know as soon as possible if you encounter a roadblock or if agreed commitments are at risk, and include a proposal for how to mitigate the impact.

4.6 Our Approach to AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has received a great deal of attention in the media and is being used across personal and professional contexts. While AI has its benefits, it has also been a source of controversy.

At Nureen, we are conscious of how we use AI. We aim to work efficiently while maintaining a human level of quality and integrity.

How we use AI:

We use AI to give critical feedback on our work prior to going to human experts and testers. It serves as an assistant in the app development and website building process. We used it to create the two concept images for our games as well as the Nureen logo on the website. AI helps us *enhance* our writing and produces the first draft of translations to Dutch and Arabic of our own written documents and text.

What remains human-led:

The creative and decision-making work stays with our team. We write the first draft in English and use AI as a middle step to improve the writing before finalizing it ourselves. Our ideas, designs, and final reviewing processes come from human judgment. Critically, all official Quranic content (Quranic text, translation, transliteration, surah information, and ASR) comes from official sources and are all cited. Books and human-made resources remain the primary sources of knowledge as we learn new skills. We strive to have every AI-generated translation reviewed and improved by native speakers before it reaches our community. The three AI-generated art pieces were reviewed by our art consultant before it was used for the website and app. With the funds we receive, we aim to hire an artist/ animator to create the final versions of these

art concepts and continue to build the custom art for the games as well as animate lantern Nureen. The base game art (buildings, plants, etc.) for the worldbuilding game has already been purchased from human artists.

This approach honors both **Ihsan (excellence & integrity)** and **Shura (seeking wisdom from your network)**. We use technology responsibly, while keeping human quality and integrity, as well as community involvement, at the center of our work.

5. What This Looks Like in Practice

5.1 Team Structure and Autonomy

Each Nureen team is composed of enthusiastic volunteers and experienced full-time professionals. Teams have:

- **Clear purpose:** What app or project are we creating, and why?
- **Defined roles:** Who does what? (These can shift as people grow.)
- **Regular connection:** How do we communicate, make decisions, and support each other?
- **Autonomy:** Teams decide how to approach their work, within the bounds of Nureen's vision and values.
- **Community-focus:** We build for the Islamic community. Seek their feedback throughout development and let their needs guide the work.

5.2 Collaboration Across Teams

Teams are not isolated silos. We:

- **Share work and feedback:** Teams show their progress to other teams, seeking input and offering support.
- **Learn from each other:** We document what works, what didn't, and why, so others can learn and adapt.
- **Celebrate together:** When a team launches an app or reaches a milestone, we celebrate as a community.

5.3 Bringing New Ideas Forward

If you have an idea for an Islamic app or project, share it with the organization. If it aligns with Nureen's vision, it can either seed a new team (if you want to lead it) or be adopted by an existing team. The new initiative then goes through our feedback and advice-seeking process to ensure it's well-considered.

Before proposing an idea, consider these eight questions*:

1. Does this feel right? (Intuition often says more than logic.)
2. Will the intended audience like this enough?
3. Is this well-designed?
4. Is this novel enough?
5. Will this be useful and help people become a better version of themselves?
6. Is it technically possible to build/create?
7. Does this meet our Islamic, social and community goals?
8. Do testers enjoy this enough?

*Questions are adapted from Schell, 2008, p. 79.

5.4 Involving the Muslim Community

Where possible, we involve the muslim community we serve in our creative process. This means:

- Consulting with educators, parents, and students about what they need
- Inviting community members to contribute art, stories, feedback, or ideas
- Making our development process transparent so others can learn and participate

6. Our Commitment to Growth

We strive for Ihsan through:

- **Continuous reflection:** We regularly pause to ask: How are we living our principles? How can we better serve our muslim community?
- **Responsive adaptation:** When we learn something can be done in a better way, we change it.
- **Supporting development:** We invest in helping teammates grow, whether that means learning new skills, deepening their spiritual practice, or strengthening their relationships.
- **Transparency:** We share what we are learning, both successes and struggles, with our broader community.

7. An Invitation

Nureen is built on a belief: that when people feel safe, valued, and connected to something larger than themselves, they do their best work. That when we consult one another with genuine respect, we make wiser decisions. That when we bring our whole selves to our work, we create with authenticity and depth.

We are inviting people who:

- Care deeply about serving the Muslim community
- Want to grow and help others grow
- Believe that technology should reflect Islamic values
- Are willing to be authentic, vulnerable, and courageous
- Trust that something beautiful is possible when we work together

This is sadaqah jariya, a continuing charity. The apps we build will serve Muslims for generations insha'Allah. The culture we create will shape how Islamic organizations can operate. The belonging we practice will ripple outward.

If you recognize yourself in this vision, we invite you to join us.

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