INTRODUCTION TO THE 3 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Behind the Book is developing a strategic plan for the next three years in order to create a decision-making framework that can help preserve, in a sustainable organization, the organization’s mission of instilling a love of reading in New York City students.

Beginning in 2018, we gathered a great deal of data through our work with Youth, Inc. and a SWOT Task Force composed of the executive director and several board members. In 2019, we formed a Strategic Planning Committee and engaged the Support Center to build on the data already collected with multiple interviews, document reviews, and benchmarking processes.

What follows is a set of goals and objectives that describe how we propose addressing the key issues that emerged from the data collection process. Accompanying this draft plan is a copy of the data collection report that distilled all data collection efforts and identified key strategic issues facing Behind the Book. Many thanks to the board and staff who dedicated their time, energy, thoughtfulness and creativity to this process.

**Strategic Planning Committee**
Robin Canter
Susan Elman, Board Chair
Steven Felgran
Jo Umans
Ian Woolley, Committee Chair
Elena Wu
BEHIND THE BOOK 3 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION

To unlock a world of endless possibilities for New York City youth by instilling a life-long love of reading and writing.

MISSION

Behind the Book’s mission is to develop engaged readers and writers in underserved NYC public schools by designing and delivering programs that are multi-disciplinary, culturally responsive, and promote deeper connections to books and their authors.

To meet our mission, we:

- Provide innovative, multi-faceted literacy programs that expose students to a wider world and position them for future success;
- Focus on Title 1 schools and align our programs with curricula that meet Common Core Learning Standards; and
- Donate thousands of books annually to students and schools to encourage independent reading throughout the year.

Note – independently of the Vision and Mission, we will continue to use our slogan on various marketing and communication materials - “Inspiring Literacy Every Day”

VALUES

- **Student-Centered** – We consistently ask, “How do our programs enrich the students and the communities we serve?” The answers inform all aspects of our programming and operations.

- **Critical Thinking** – Students’ ability to question and think critically is a primary goal and a reflection of our efforts as a learning organization.

- **Telling their Own Stories** – We give young people the tools and the opportunities they need to find their own voices, express how they feel, discover something special about themselves and connect to a wider world.

- **Authentic Representation** – We strive to use books and authors who reflect the face and diverse experiences of the children we serve so they can “See themselves in the book.”

- **Teamwork** – From co-creating with students to partnering with authors, teachers and school administrators, to the collegial atmosphere experienced by the board and staff, teamwork and collaboration is a hallmark of all we do.
Joy – Our programs for developing engaged readers are infused with the joy to be found in the creative process and the sense of accomplishment and pride in oneself as a result.

Integrity – Our board and staff are guided by the highest professional and ethical standards.
3-YEAR GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Program
*Deliver high-quality, innovative and sustainable literacy programs with proven impact.*

Planning Rationale
The key question that emerged from the data collection process is “How can a highly customized program model be modified to become scalable and attract more funding while maintaining and demonstrating its impact?”

Objectives
- Develop a clear Theory of Change.
- Explore additional opportunities to measure impact.
- Explore options for program growth, expansion and scalability.
- Analyze each aspect of the programming process with the goal of identifying opportunities for streamlining and efficiencies.
- Build a pipeline to new authors.

Leadership Transition
*Secure the future with stable executive leadership characterized by strong management experience, emotional maturity, vision and the ability to engage others with their passion for our mission.*

Planning Rationale
The founder had been considering retiring but has decided to stay on to oversee the Strategic Planning and fundraising initiatives. She has agreed to provide 2 years notice to the Board prior to her departure. At such time the following actions shall be taken:

Objectives
**Within 3 months:**
- Complete a comprehensive emergency succession plan that captures all organization information in one place, so no institutional memory is lost.

**Upon the founder giving two year’s notice to the Board prior to her departure:**
- Convene a Leadership Transition Committee and develop a transition plan that includes a timeline, workplan and communications plan for the transition process.
- Determine if the person to follow the founder will be an interim executive or permanent full-time hire.
- Develop a job description for the next executive director.
- In conjunction with this transition, explore the possibility of a merger.
Resource Development/Fundraising

Diversify, expand and strengthen our fundraising efforts and develop meaningful strategic partnerships, while enhancing the name and reputation of the organization.

Planning Rationale

BtB has not fully tapped its potential for individual giving, corporate partnerships and institutional support, nor is it as well-known as it might be.

Objectives

- Create a comprehensive development plan aimed at increasing the budget to $1 Million per year (excluding in-kind donations) over the next 2-3 years that includes strategies for expanding institution support, corporate sponsorship, board giving and major donors.
- Identify development staff needs – including current, transition and post-founder needs.
- Explore potential for outsourcing some aspects of BtB development work.
- Develop a robust communications and marketing plan that can begin to identify new donors and partners drawn to the work of BtB.

Governance

Continue to build a highly engaged, diverse, fundraising board of directors with the skills and leadership needed to support our mission.

Planning Rationale

The board will need to keep pace with the organization’s evolution while maintaining its collegial and collaborative culture. The board will also need to provide stable leadership and take on an extended role in stewarding key relationships during the executive transition.

Objectives

- Assess the current board’s composition and skills and identify the diverse attributes, skills, connections and expertise needed to enhance the board’s effectiveness.
- Align board development strategy with the goals of the strategic and fundraising plan.
- Review role of committees and committee structure as a pipeline for board membership and leadership.
- Ensure our Board Committees have clear goals and the board members are engaged in their committee work.
- Identify areas where the board can participate in advocacy and other external relationship building activities, including funders and corporate partnerships.
**Operations and Organizational Structure**  
*Develop a thriving organization with an efficient and effective operating system and the right people in the right jobs.*

**Planning Rationale**  
The organization infrastructure will need to evolve to support program growth and it might operate more efficiently by utilizing technology more effectively. The leadership transition will have an impact on staff roles and responsibilities, and it might be an opportunity to explore merging or partnering with another literacy organization.

**Objectives**
- Clarify staffing needs and changes in organization structure in light of the impending leadership transition.
- Identify the technology, software and other tools needed to operate more efficiently and effectively across development, program delivery and general operations.
- Continue to build strategic partnerships with other literacy organizations.