LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Dear Colleagues:

I am so pleased to share the VISIONS’ strategic plan for 2020 - 2023 with our community. This plan reflects the hard work of our staff, consultants, and Board members over the past several months, a time that has been particularly challenging for all of us as individuals, an organization, and a society.

This plan is being launched during twin pandemics -- a global pandemic resulting from a coronavirus that began just a few months ago and during the advent of what may become a new movement for social justice and racial equality that seeks to move us forward as a community after 400+ years of racism in this country.

We also launch this plan at a unique time in the evolution of VISIONS. Our founding executive director has recently stepped down from her role and in addition to new leadership at the staff level, we have had an incredible influx of new young talent among our staff, consultants, and our Board. As such, while the world around us is being transformed, so is our organization. At the same time, we recognize that our roots and foundational and groundbreaking work from our past are essential to guide our way through these changes.

The need for VISIONS is greater now than ever before, and the need for a strategic plan to guide our work, shape our priorities, and maintain both our focus and our flexibility is greater now than ever before, as well.

I want to thank all who contributed to the development of this road map and to Fio Partners for facilitating this important process. Despite all of the uncertainty and pain in our world, I remain excited and hopeful that the work of VISIONS in the years to come will help to achieve real and lasting change in our world.

Sincerely,
Louise Coggins, Board Chair

Members of the Planning Team

OUR PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process was launched in August 2019. The goals of this process were to create a shared vision, and a plan to realize this vision. A third-party consultant (Fio Partners, LLC) was engaged to provide experience and input to the efforts. Fio gathered data from internal and external sources to capture observations of the organization from a variety of perspectives. Activities undertaken or developed over the course of the process included:

- Financial Analysis
- Staff and Consultant Focus Group
- Management Safeguards/Supports Self-Assessment
- Key Informant Interviews
- Client Survey
The information gathered was shared with the Board of Directors members for use in a full-day, virtual retreat in May 2020. At this session, Board members provided input to the overall strategic direction reflected in the plan, as well as provided input into suggested goals, strategies, and tactics. Staff leadership worked with Fio to consolidate this input and transform the information gathered into a three-year strategic plan and a logic model to guide VISIONS.

The strategic plan lays out a three-year scope of work, with high-level goals, key strategies, and proposed tactics. A detailed implementation plan for the first year is also being developed to inform the implementation of the plan.

**KEY THEMES IN OUR LEARNING**

**VISIONS is at an Important Inflection Point in its Evolution**

VISIONS, as an organization, is in the process of undergoing a significant change. There is new leadership at the staff level, significant turnover in the Board that has resulted in a new generation of volunteer leaders, and a gradual transition of its consultants to a new generation of individuals who are seeking to make the work of VISIONS their calling. All of this change, occurring at the same time, can create both significant stresses on an organization and create exciting opportunities. It is important to recognize that the organization is launching a strategic plan in the context of significant organizational change in terms of its capacity.

**The Contexts of our Work are Changing**

In addition to the changes within VISIONS, there are also external contexts that are changing that may impact VISIONS moving forward. For one, the national political environment that the nation has experienced over the past few years has both increased polarization in our country, as well as heightened the need and demand for VISIONS. Indeed, some of the key informants that contributed to the information base noted that a change in political administration in 2020 could result in reduced polarization and perhaps less demand (or urgency) for DEI services. At the same time, recent events have accelerated the urgency of addressing issues of systemic change, primarily focused on police and criminal justice, as well as on health disparities.

Concurrently, the increase in demand and supply of DEI consultants has led to a proliferation of models, frameworks, terminology, and approaches to this work. As the field of DEI further matures and resources are invested to assess the efficacy of these various models and approaches, there may be a better understanding of best practices, which may or may not impact the VISIONS’ model.

**The Need to Further Refine and Clarify the Work of VISIONS Moving Forward**

There is some need to better define and codify the work of VISIONS as the organization moves forward. Part of this need is driven by the perceived urgency of the moment -- what does VISIONS offer and what can it do. Part of this is driven by the need to clarify what VISIONS
offers for external audiences. Client survey feedback indicated that while clients had additional needs beyond the initial work that VISIONS performed, needs that VISIONS could in many cases meet, clients were unaware of VISIONS’ other capabilities. From a business perspective, there was also a need for greater understanding as to where and what the business is (and where and what the organization wants to be). It was also noted that there may be a dichotomy between the social justice framework’s explicit focus and the training VISIONS currently does, which is a more personal approach. Overlaying this need is a sense of urgency driven by the prevailing moment.

Building an Organizational Culture for the Future (and Linking to our Values)

The significant change in leadership staffing, consultants, and the Board is likely to result in some dynamic tension between the historic culture of VVISIONS and the culture that the new members of the VVISIONS’ community are seeking to experience and work under. Whether it is generational shifts in the community (with an influx of younger folx), different lived experiences they bring, or even different goals for their work, it will be important for VISIONS to intentionally create the organizational culture that the organization feels best fits its needs and priorities. The reinvigoration of organizational values, as well as VVISIONS’ mission and vision statements, are important first steps in this direction, but they will need to be followed up through action, policy and process changes as needed, and leadership.

Telling our Story

There is a strong sense that while the organization has an important and compelling story to tell about its origins, evolution, and current work, this story is known by only a few. There is a need to tell this story to multiple audiences (and perhaps in different ways) -- potential clients, potential donors and funders, potential partners, and potential members of the VVISIONS’ community (board, staff, and consultants). In addition, there is the recognition that the VVISIONS’ story needs to be told through different media and in different languages.

Increasing Support for Internal Operations and Delivery of our Services

Much of the Board’s focus in its search for new leadership was the desire to further strengthen the infrastructure of VVISIONS to better support the organization’s current and future work. There was a sense among consultants and the Board that there is an opportunity to become an even more well-oiled machine in terms of business processes, transparency, and consistency as the organization evolves and grows in terms of budget, size, and complexity. It was also noted that there is a concurrent desire to retain core elements of VVISIONS’ culture, in terms of its family-feel and sense of community, as the organization enhances its systems and supports.
MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

OUR CURRENT MISSION

Our mission is:

● To equip individuals, organizations, and communities with the tools needed to thrive in a diverse world.
● To remove structural and cultural barriers that prevent full and equitable participation. ● To help create environments where differences are recognized, understood, appreciated, and utilized for the benefit of all.

We will realize this mission by implementing a time-tested, insight-driven training and consulting model that will empower our clients to become catalysts for change and effectively engage all people in the deep, challenging, and rewarding work of authentic inclusion, personally and within their organizations and communities.

OUR PROPOSED MISSION

To empower the creation of environments where differences are recognized, understood, appreciated, and utilized for the benefit of all through both time-tested and innovative training and tools, public advocacy, and consulting models addressing the personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels.

OUR CURRENT VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY

Our vision is to be a catalyst for a more equitable world where differences are valued and used for the benefit of all.

OUR PROPOSED VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY

We envision a more equitable world where:

● Differences are valued and used for the benefit of all
● There is a common awareness of and language for addressing issues of difference among all sectors
● Communities listen more, always seek to understand each other first, grow in their curiosity of each other's perspective, and accept that multiple perspectives are the pathway towards equity and liberation.
● Our justice, health care, education, and other systems are more equitable
● Intersectionality is recognized, understood, and acted upon
OUR PROPOSED VISION FOR THE ORGANIZATION

We envision a future where VISIONS is known globally for our expertise, skills, and talents, where we:

- Are viewed as authorities and experts in this work
- Are equitable and transparent in all that we do
- Operate in a manner that is sustainable, financially successful, and able to invest as needed in critical functions and supports
- Ensure continuous excellence of consultants, staff, and board members
- Achieve impact at the policy and systems levels through collaboration with policy groups that are primarily focused on advocacy

OUR CURRENT VALUES

Act to Benefit Others: By thoughtful and prudent conduct, VISIONS aspires to maximize the benefits of our work and to prevent or minimize harm to others through acts of commission or omission in our behaviors.

Model Social Responsibility: VISIONS is committed to assuring fundamental fairness for all individuals within the community. In pursuit of this goal, the principles of impartiality, equity, and reciprocity are basic.

Honor Reciprocity: VISIONS embraces the spirit of reciprocity as a time-honored tradition in African-centered cultures and organizations. With an awareness that interconnectedness and mutuality are defining factors in our personal and business relationships, this practice is at the core of our organizational identity.

Live with Integrity: VISIONS will promote honesty, forthrightness, self-reflection, trust, and directness in our interpersonal and work relationships.

OUR PROPOSED VALUES

Founding Principle: The spirit of reciprocity is a time-honored tradition in African-centered cultures and organizations. This spirit forms the fabric of who we are as an organization and is essential to what we do and how we do it. We recognize that our consultants bring skills and abilities learned prior to, and concurrent with, their own experiences in VISIONS. As an organization, we collectively benefit from the skills, abilities, and self-development processes of the consultants. The power of VISIONS is derived from our relationships with one another and the mutual support these relationships provide.

Core Values:

Equity -- We are committed to fundamental fairness and justice for all individuals and reflect these principles in our actions and interactions with others.

Integrity -- We are trustworthy, honest, and transparent in what we say and what we do.
**Diversity** -- We acknowledge and recognize the unique perspectives, lived experiences, and beliefs of those with whom we work and support.

**Inclusivity** -- We welcome and embrace differences. We seek to include people and perspectives that might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.

**Connectedness** -- We strive to create community in our work and conduct ourselves with empathy where we seek to understand and accept others.

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**2020 - 2023 PLAN GOALS**

**Goal #1:** Further Codify our Current Offerings and Evolve our Portfolio to Meeting Community Needs and the Development of the Next Generation of DEI Leaders

**Goal #2:** Establish an Overall And Integrated Marketing, Fundraising, and Partnership Strategy to Enhance and Strengthen VISIONS’ Reach and Impact

**Goal #3:** Strengthen VISIONS Internal Capacity to Support, Sustain, and Expand Services

**Goal #4:** Position the Board of Directors to Best Support and Advance the Work of VISIONS
STRATEGY FOR GOALS

Goal #1: Further Codify our Current Offerings and Evolve our Portfolio to Meeting Community Needs and the Development of the Next Generation of DEI Leaders

Strategy 1: Codify and Formalize our Work to Create a Full Menu of VISIONS’ Offerings

Strategy 2: Expand our Offerings to Include Focus on Youth

Strategy 3: Expand our Offerings to Include Focus on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

Strategy 4: Become a Certification and Education Resource for Trainers

Goal #2: Establish an Overall and Integrated Marketing, Fundraising, and Partnership Strategy to Enhance and Strengthen VISIONS’ Reach and Impact

Strategy 1: Develop, Resource, and Implement a Marketing and Communications Plan that Supports Business Development and Fund Development

Strategy 2: Establish a Fund Development Strategy

Strategy 3: Develop Signature Partnerships that Advance the Work, Brand, and Impact of VISIONS

Strategy 4: Develop the Capacity to Advocate and Address Policy Issues as Extension of Consulting Work

Goal #3: Strengthen VISIONS’ Culture and Internal Capacity to Support, Sustain, and Expand Services

Strategy 1: Invest in and Improve Organizational Infrastructure and Work Processes/Systems

Strategy 2: Establish a Quality Improvement Capacity to Assess and Measure the Impact of the Work

Strategy 3: Further Develop and Formalize the Learning Agenda for VISIONS’ Consultants

Strategy 4: Develop an Organizational Culture that Recognizes Our History and Enables our Future
Goal #4: Position the Board of Directors to Best Support and Advance the Work of VISIONS

Strategy 1: Review and Update Our Board Structure
Strategy 2: Update and Clarify Board Roles and Expectations
Strategy 3: Continue Intentional Board Development

Monitoring Our Progress

Implementation Approach

The Strategic Plan is a living document that is a road map by which the staff and Board of VISIONS should be held accountable. The plan should be utilized to create annual goals for the organization. Progress against annual goals can be monitored by ensuring regular updates on plan progress at Board of Directors meetings and consistent reporting on desired key results, noted below.

In addition, a detailed implementation plan will be used to track progress against the selected strategies and tactics for the first year and then updated accordingly for each successive year.

Key Results

The implementation of the Strategic Plan is envisioned to enact a set of measurable key results. For each goal, the table below outlines key areas of measurement and proposed key results. The proposed key results are based upon areas of measurement that currently exist within the organization where progress can be tracked. In these cases, targets were developed by senior management.

In some areas, baseline data, as well as the management capacity to measure and report on progress, will need to be created as part of the first year of implementation. It is envisioned that a dashboard of key results would be created to track progress against key results and be reported to the Board of Directors periodically throughout implementation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Key Areas of Measurement Key Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal #1: Further Codify our Current Offerings and Evolve our Portfolio to Meeting Community Needs and the Development of the Next Generation of DEI Leaders</td>
<td>Market share</td>
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<td>Revenue and revenue mix</td>
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<td>Training and certification</td>
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<td>Client satisfaction</td>
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<td>Client retention</td>
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<td>Goal #2: Establish an Overall And Integrated Marketing, Fundraising, and Partnership Strategy to Enhance and Strengthen VISIONS’ Reach and Impact</td>
<td>Fundraising outcomes</td>
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<td>Marketing and Communications outcomes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Partnership outcomes</td>
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<td>Advocacy outcomes</td>
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<td>Consultant and staff morale</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consultation and training outcomes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Board engagement</td>
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<td>Board fundraising</td>
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<td>Board referrals for new clients</td>
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<td>Board pipeline</td>
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