

*Unite  
by Night*

**STRATEGIC  
PLAN  
2020 |  
2023**



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# INTRODUCTION

*Letter from Unite by Night Co-Founder and Board Chair, Emily Burns Perryman*

Dear Stakeholders,

I am pleased to present Unite by Night's first official Strategic Plan for 2020 to 2023. This three year plan is the culmination of the combined efforts of our dedicated founder group and Board of Directors and was a focus of our activities in 2019.

## **A Plan of Action**

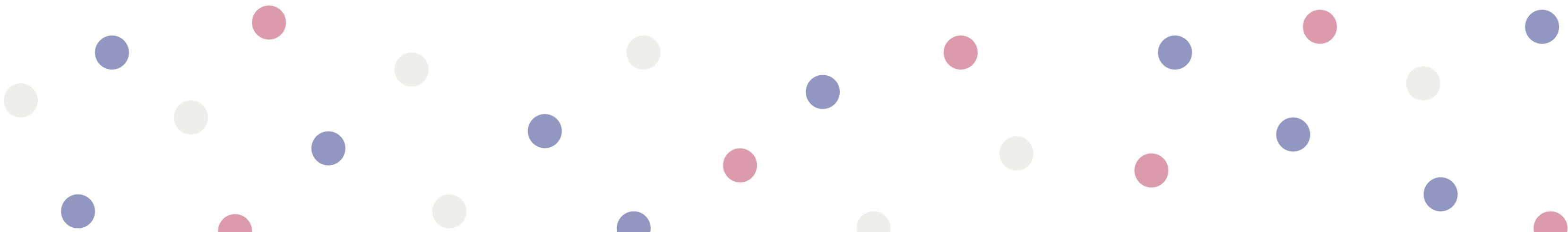
Our Strategic Plan combines Unite by Night's unique operations model, knowledge of the Western New York (WNY) nonprofit sector, and creative problem solving skills to address the challenges faced by Americans facing the systemic issues of racism, bias, and discrimination. Our work to address these issues is driven by sincere passion and observation of current events in



(con't) our community and beyond. This strategic plan demonstrates our systematic approach to build capacity, stability, and thus, sustainability of our organization, so that we can be a part of positive change. We aim to use this plan to fulfil our mission and rise to new levels of excellence to address the challenging issues faced in our beloved community and beyond. We desire to see change, so we aim to not only be a part of it, but help lead the charge.

## **Change Can Begin Because of Support and Engagement**

In just a few short years, Unite by Night has received substantial recognition from our community and elected officials. In the spring of 2019, the **National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York** (NFJCWNY) selected Unite by Night as its Community Leader in the category of Public Relations, with the honor bestowed at its prestigious Community Leader Luncheon event at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center.



This year, Unite by Night also received a beneficial financial grant from City of Buffalo Common Council Delaware District representative **Councilman Joel Feroletto**. In addition to Councilman Feroletto's generous support, funding has also been received from global industrial gases, supply, and equipment giant **Linde**, and local real estate company **716 Realty Group**. We are thankful for this generous financial support as it helps us sustain operations and continue to fulfill our mission.

Unite by Night was also recently selected to participate in the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County's Next Generation United led social innovation event "Pitch 10," vying for up to \$10,000 worth of financial support. While we didn't win this year, the goal of generating increased awareness and visibility within the nonprofit sector and within WNY has been achieved through inclusion in this exciting and rewarding event.



## Collaborative Partnerships

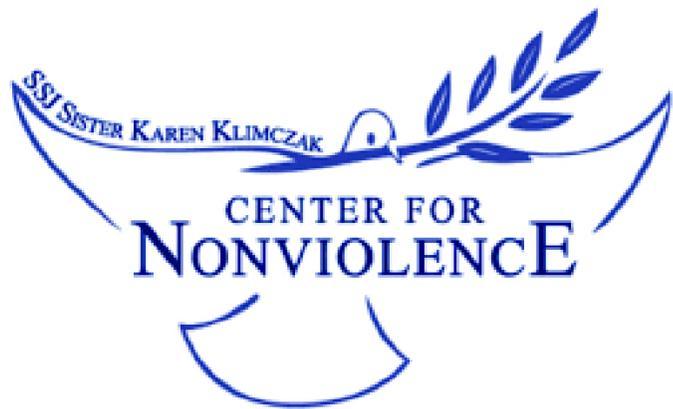
From our inaugural year in 2017, Unite by Night has not only gained recognition through community support and earned media, but has also worked quickly to establish strong community partner and creative, collaborative relationships with the NFJCWNY, Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence, Camp Peaceprints, Western New York Women's Foundation, Western New York Book Arts Center, Black Rock Riverside Alliance, and the Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition. We look forward to continued exploration with local organizations.



*"...a just community begins with me!"*



WNY WOMEN'S FOUNDATION



We are also thrilled to have recently selected our year three community partner **For Every Little Handprint**, an amazing organization dedicated to alleviating the effects of childhood poverty across Western New York. As we got to know For Every Little Handprint's Executive Director Olivia Larson and the organization's mission, we started to better understand the clear connection to our own mission, realizing that *poverty is closely connected with racism and contributes to racist attitudes and practices which in turn generate more poverty*. We are excited to combat all of these things together during our 12 month community partnership.



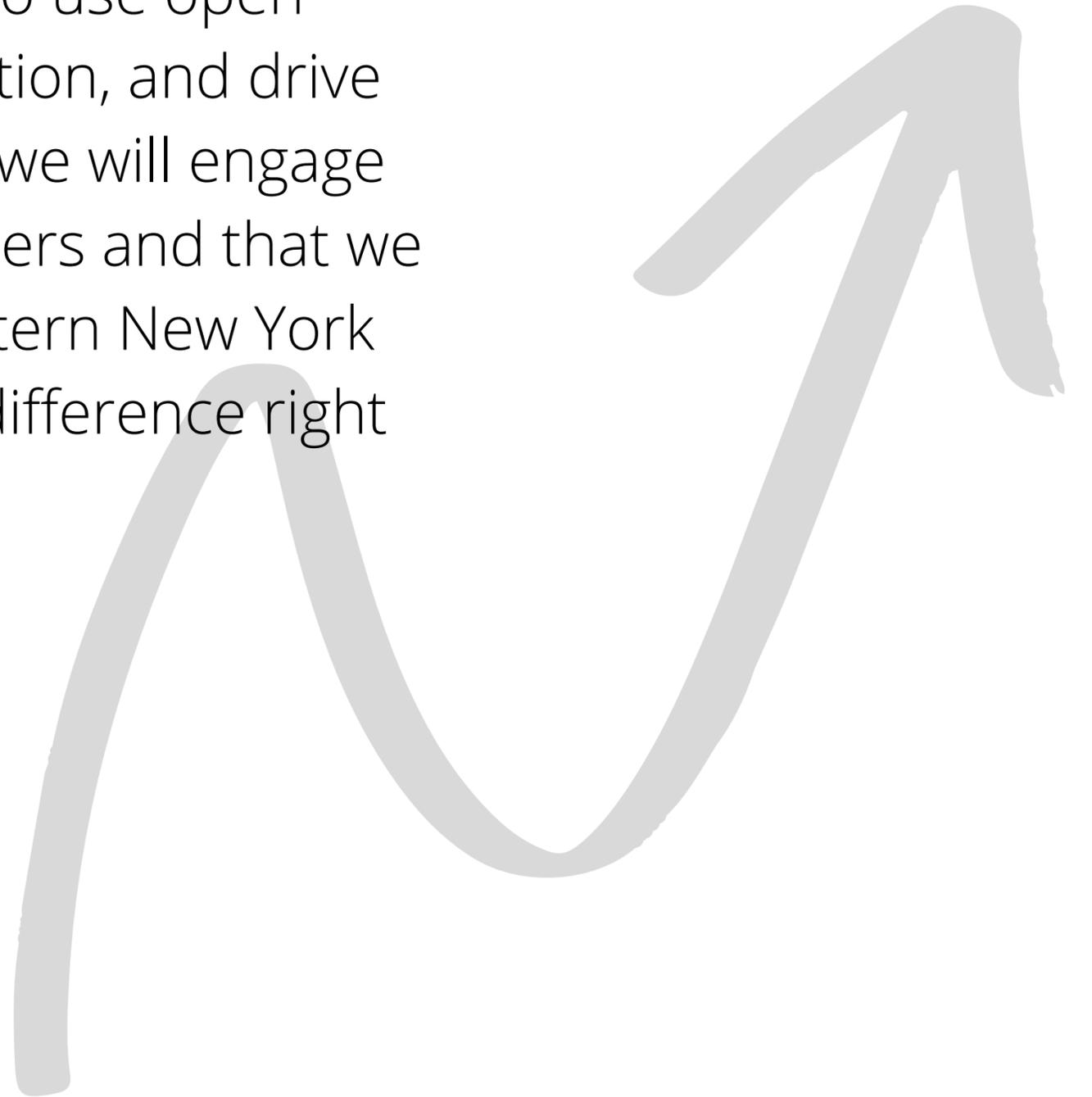
## The Future

Moving forward, Unite by Night's Strategic Plan 2020 to 2023 will serve as a blueprint for our organization's continued work to use open communication to power conversation and collaboration, and drive creativity to help fulfill our mission. I am hopeful that we will engage with a growing list of corporate and community partners and that we continue to encourage our friends, families, and Western New York neighbors to blend passion with purpose to make a difference right here at home... and beyond.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily B. Perryman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "P".

Emily Burns Perryman

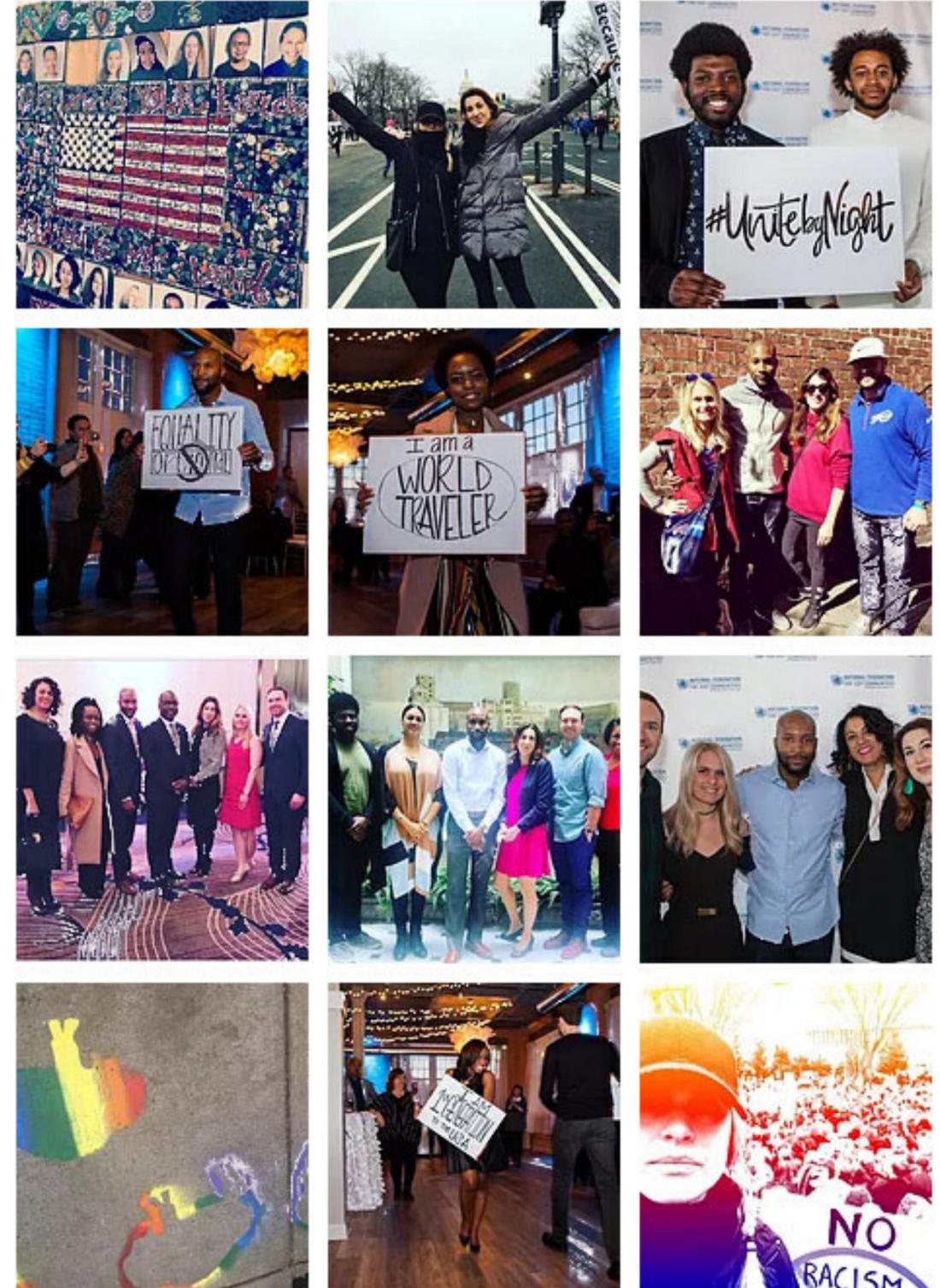
Co-Founder, Board President, Unite by Night



# OUR HISTORY

*It started with conversation...*

Currents events, new stories and happenings in the U.S. in 2016 prompted Unite by Night's co-founder group to have very different conversations than were typically had in the past. Now instead of chats about reality TV, celebrity gossip or sports, the dialogue consisted of thoughts, fears, and concerns about the issues of racism, bias, discrimination, and divisiveness in America. Four friends quickly realized then that they shared specific critical concerns and all felt passionately about **mobilizing to create positive change and working towards the greater good starting right in their own WNY community.**



# OUR HISTORY

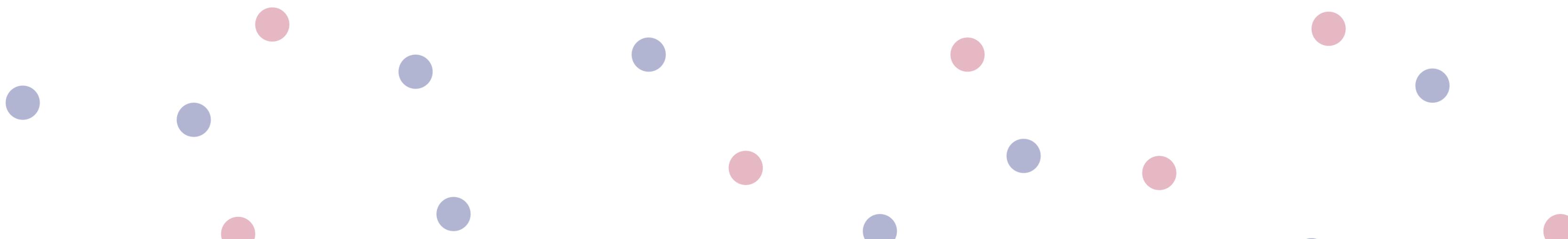
In January of 2017, several of those friends attended the Women's March on Washington. It was during this road trip and very personal, life changing experience that the idea of civic involvement, engagement, and service began to take shape, and the idea of creating a small, nonprofit startup came to life.

Meeting in the evenings after work and life slowed down a bit, the friends and soon to be co-founders strategized and determined a **twelve months of service model** to be dedicated to the local nonprofits that align with their values. Knowing that amazing work was already being accomplished around Buffalo and WNY, the group proposed to help fill in holes, address pain points, and provide a fresh perspective and connection to young professionals and other new audiences, to help nonprofits achieve their goals and fulfill their important missions.

# OUR HISTORY

Looking forward to expand within college campuses and other locations across the country in the future, Unite by Night strives to convene people together to converse, collaborate, and challenge themselves to use their education, creativity, skills and abilities to work towards positive change and common good.

**UNITE BY NIGHT WAS  
CREATED IN A HANDFUL OF  
EVENINGS TOGETHER,  
BUT AIMS TO WORK HARD  
EACH YEAR TO SUPPORT  
LOCAL NONPROFITS NO  
MATTER WHAT TIME  
OF DAY.**



# THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Unite by Night's strategic planning process was primarily informed by John M. Bryson's 2018 book *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*. The book presented a preferred approach to strategic planning and management for public and nonprofit organizations, specifically the **10-step Strategy Change Cycle**.

This tool offered Unite by Night an orderly, deliberative, and participative process used by the organization's strategic planning team to help develop the 2020-2023 plan.



# THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

- Initiate and agree on a strategic planning process;
- Identify organizational mandates;
- Clarify organizational mission and values;
- Assess the external and internal environment to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats;
- Identify the issues facing the organization;
- Formulate strategies to manage the issues;
- Review and adopt the strategies or strategic plan;
- Establish an effective organizational vision;
- Develop an effective implementation process;
- Reassess the strategies and the strategic planning process.

10  
steps

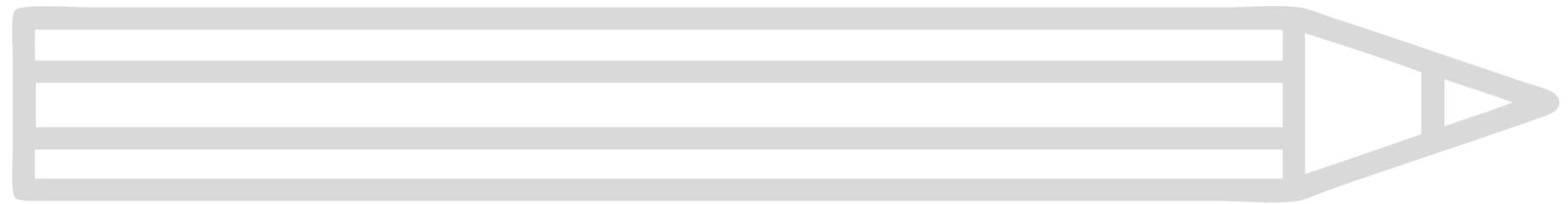
# THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Unite by Night founder group and Board of Directors met regularly throughout 2019 to debate and discuss this specific strategic planning approach. The group then worked collaboratively in the summer of 2019 during an all-day strategic planning session utilizing the 10-step strategic planning process to inform the organization's 2020-2023 plan.

Unite by Night's Board Chair leadership worked further to shape and finalize this strategic plan document, intended to help the organization move forward with purposeful direction and to communicate organizational intentions to the public.

# RESEARCH & HYPOTHESES

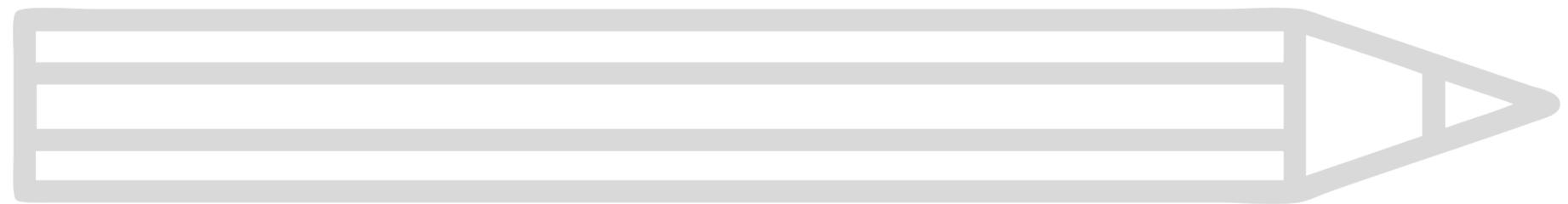
In addition to the guidance provided by the 10-Step Strategic Planning Process, research was conducted on **theoretical frameworks of leadership and organizational culture, as well as best practices within the nonprofit sector**. This has all been accomplished in order to help inform the creation of this strategic plan. That is because all of the information acquired has helped inform hypotheses regarding what types of leadership, organizational culture, and operations are required for a young nonprofit like Unite by Night to build stability, sustainability, and mitigate the risk of failure.



# RESEARCH & HYPOTHESES

## **Background**

There are many issues and challenges faced by young nonprofits in the early stages of their life cycle. Unfortunately, these issues and challenges can lead to instability. While there is not a large amount of existing research or literature available on nonprofits in the early stages of their life cycle, the limited research available has uncovered several common issues and challenges often experienced by young nonprofit organizations. These include: poor research and planning, lack of a business plan, absence of financial knowledge, the assumption that it is simple or uncomplicated to start a nonprofit, as well as difficulties related to building an effective board.



# RESEARCH & HYPOTHESES

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, **20% of small businesses fail in their first year and about 50% of them experience failure in the first four years.** Failure is an everyday and common reality for the business world, especially for entrepreneurs in the early stages of their business life cycle, or the range of one to ten years of operation. When fledgling nonprofits are just getting started, the early stages of their existence can be a precarious time as well, filled with instability and thus, the risk of failure, just like many small businesses and startup companies experience.

**THE BUSINESS WORLD  
VERY CLEARLY  
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OFTEN LEAD TO:  
COLLAPSE.**

# RESEARCH & HYPOTHESES

The statistics and research that support the concept of young nonprofit instability tells a daunting and perhaps discouraging story. In addition, a lack of literature on the topic of nonprofit startups available indicates that further investigation and examination of this topic is needed.

**This problem turned into an opportunity that has lead Unite by Night to look closely at the optimal types of leadership and organizational culture that can build stability.** This work analyzed the issues and challenges faced by early life cycle stage nonprofits and has identified ways that Unite by Night leadership, board members, and volunteers can all work collaboratively to mitigate risk and combat failure.

The logo for 'Unite by Night' is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The word 'Unite' is in blue, 'by' is in red, and 'Night' is in blue. The letters are thick and have a slightly textured, brush-like appearance.

# RESEARCH & HYPOTHESES

## What We Learned About: Theories of Leadership

1. Our leadership will be adaptable, nimble, and capable of addressing changing circumstances and taking advantage of opportunities.
2. Our organization will continue to focus on leadership that encourages and promotes the joy of service and the fulfillment found in blending passion with purpose.
3. Our leadership will not address the concept of diversity only because it is an obligation, but because of its value to our operations and the community. Leaders who possess diversity of professional skill, experience, perspective, values, and character must always be considered as we build our board, community partnerships, and volunteer base.



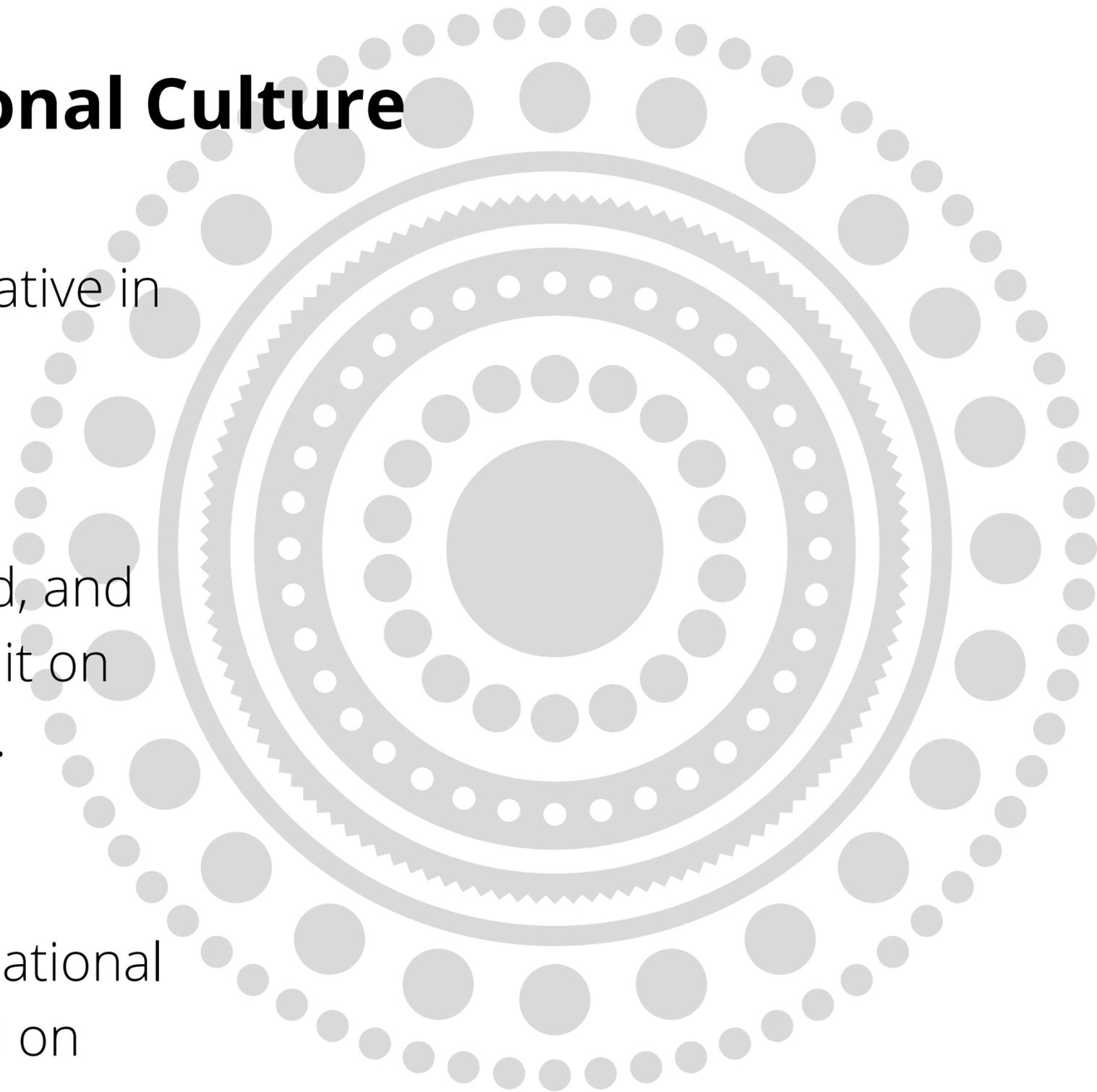
# RESEARCH & HYPOTHESES

## What We Learned About: Organizational Culture

1. Our organization will work to develop a strong organizational culture, specifically one that is collaborative in nature, working alongside our key stakeholders and community partners to fulfil our mission.

2. Our organization will continually assess, understand, and strengthen our organizational culture, understanding it on our own terms, including its strengths and challenges.

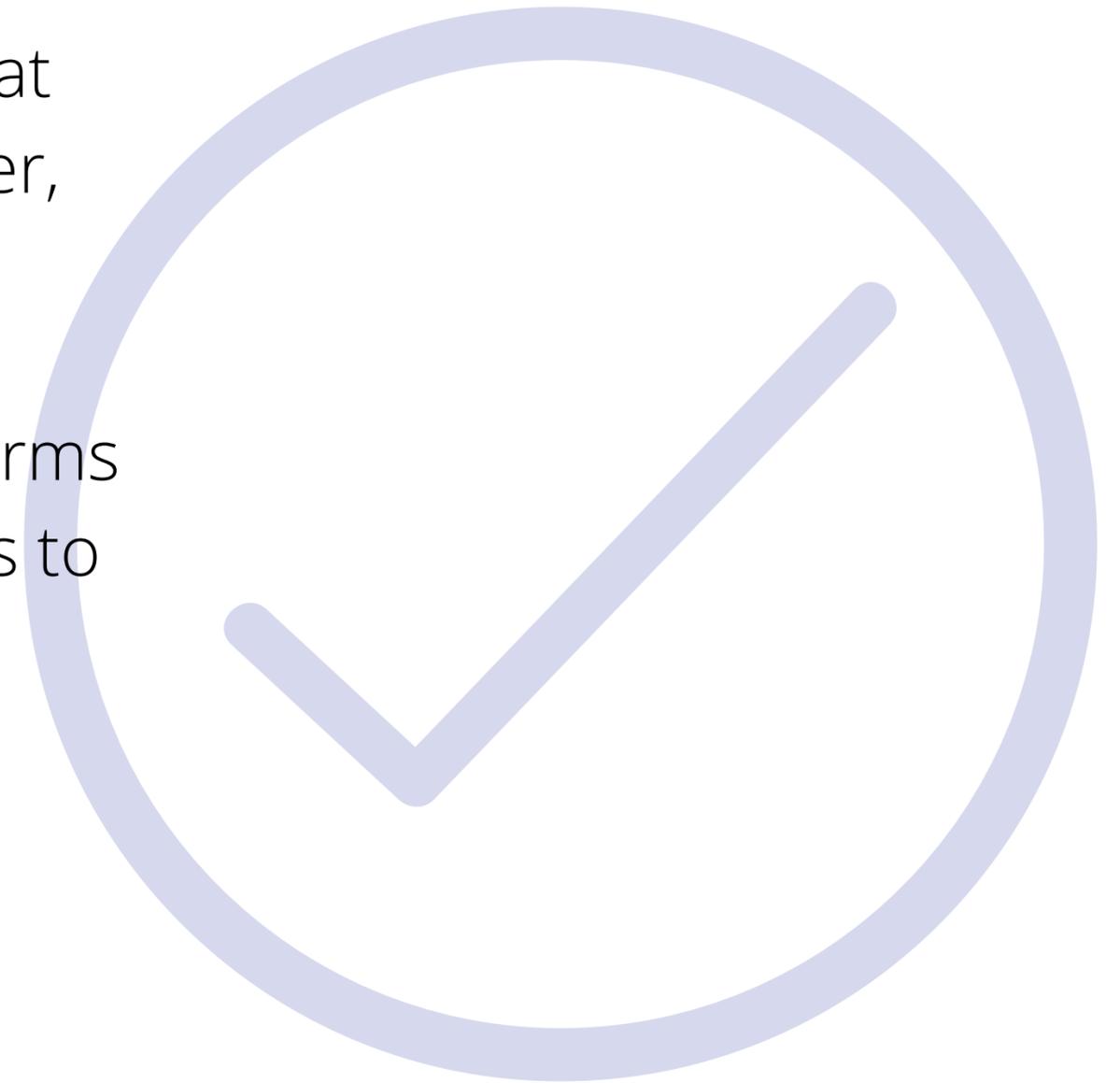
3. Our organization will ensure that Unite by Night leadership is held accountable to build strong organizational culture, and provide inspiration and direction focused on service.



# RESEARCH & HYPOTHESES

## What We Learned From Key Case Studies & Best Practices

1. Our organization will leverage the internal resources that board members, volunteers, and community partners offer, specifically familiarity and adeptness with technology.
2. Our organization will utilize emerging fundraising platforms and tactics including crowd funding and social media tools to help fulfill our mission and raise awareness and visibility.
3. Our organization will continually look for new ways to utilize technology and new tools in our operations.



# MANDATES, MISSION, AND VALUES

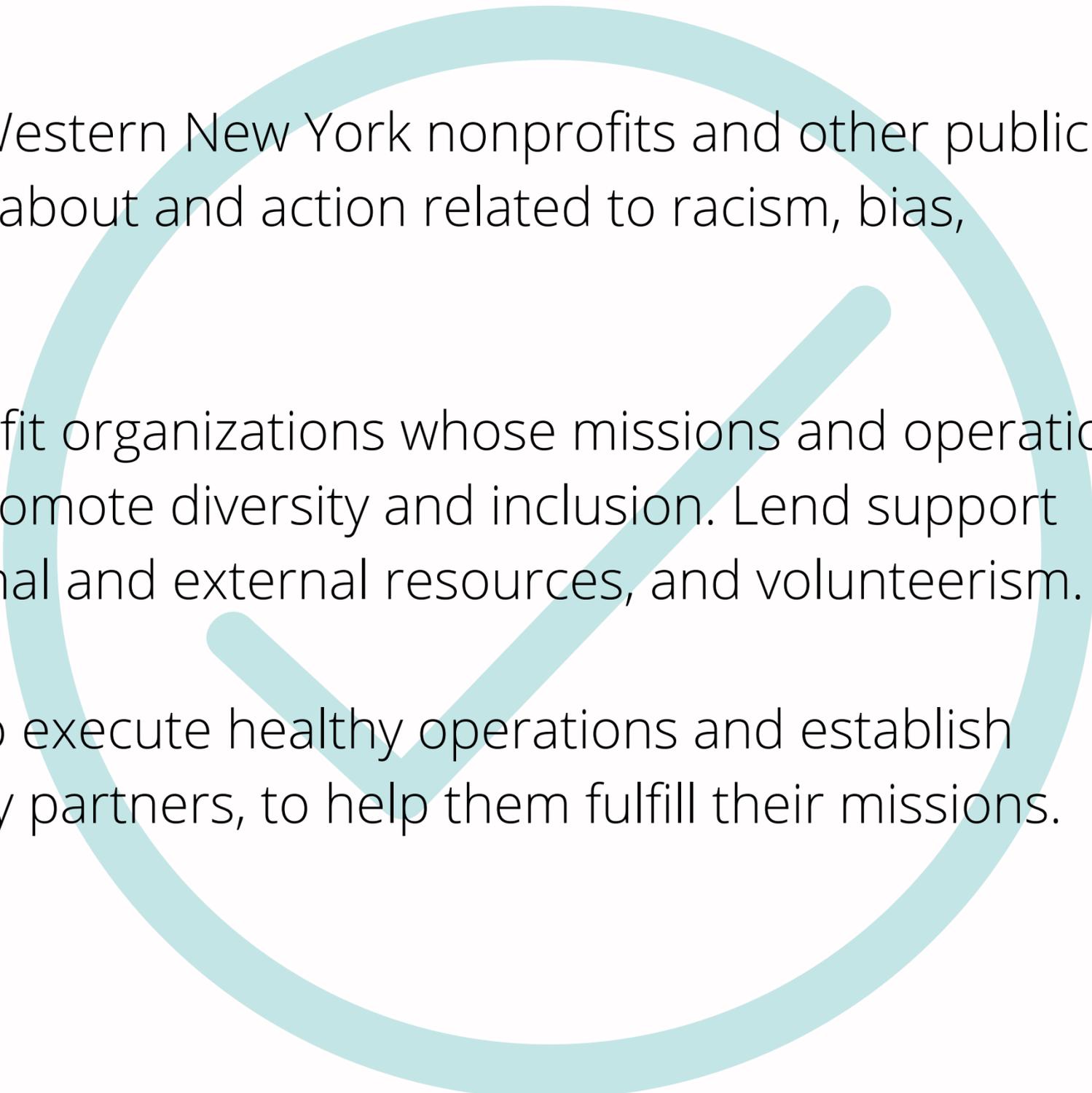
Before an organization can define its mission and values, it should know exactly what it is formally and informally required to do. This thinking helped shape Unite by Night's organizational mandates.

# MANDATES, MISSION, AND VALUES

“Together, mandates, mission, and values indicate broadly the public value the organization will create and provide the social justification and legitimacy on which the organization’s existence depends.”

*-Strategic Planning for Public  
and Nonprofit Organizations, 2018*

# ORGANIZATIONAL MANDATES

1. Create collaborative opportunities between Western New York nonprofits and other public and private entities that stimulate conversation about and action related to racism, bias, discrimination, diversity, and inclusion.
  2. Support local Western New York area nonprofit organizations whose missions and operations address racism, bias, and discrimination, and promote diversity and inclusion. Lend support through the donation of professional skill, internal and external resources, and volunteerism.
  3. Generate revenue to enable Unite by Night to execute healthy operations and establish increased fundraising capacity for its community partners, to help them fulfill their missions.
- 

# OUR MISSION



Unite by Night's mission is to support Western New York area nonprofits and community stakeholders who combat racism, bias, and discrimination while promoting diversity and inclusion.

# OUR VALUES

Collaboration

Communication

Community

Diversity

Open-Mindedness

Respect

# OUR VISION

As a young nonprofit, Unite by Night will continue to thrive by building organizational stability, exploring collaboration with community partners, and donating the resources of:

- professional skill and connections, a strong and capable volunteer pool, funding, and time. These resources will be donated to local Western New York area nonprofits whose missions address racism, bias, and discrimination, and whose operations support diversity and inclusion efforts in our community.

# SWOT ANALYSIS

## Strengths

- **Community:** awareness, outreach, relationship building
- **Culture:** collaborative, creative, positive team dynamics, open and respectful conversations, young and energetic, dedicated to positive change, in rapid growth mode
- **Limited Competition:** unique operations model
- **Media and Public Relations:** strong ability to generate earned media, polished and professional co-founders and board that engages often with the community
- **Professional Skills:** connections to people and resources, diverse skill set and educational backgrounds

# SWOT ANALYSIS

## Weaknesses

- **Community Perception:** as diversity or training experts, this is inaccurate
- **Identity:** Need to diversity board membership and volunteer base
- **No High Impact Event/Program/Services:** Need to develop revenue generators that work to sustain operations and combat racism, bias, and discrimination directly
- **Organizational Operations:** lack of specific roles, specific calls to action, measurable data, financial security, technology, collaboration and meeting space, corporate ask strategy, overall strategic direction, brick and mortar home base, volunteer base or on boarding process for Board members or volunteers, a “yes” strategy that instead needs to be more strategic
- **Resources:** financial, specific professional skills, time

# SWOT ANALYSIS

## Opportunities

- **Awareness & Visibility:** awards & recognition programs, powerful and cohesive branding, clarifying organizational role, potential earned media opportunities, developing talking points/elevator pitch
- **Build and Manage Volunteer Base and Board**
- **Collaboration Opportunities:** new chapters, local organizations, focus on expanding within higher education due to existing relationships with local WNY institutions
- **Revenue:** fundraising, grants, sponsorship, reoccurring revenue stream via signature and ancillary events
- **Team development:** build camaraderie, education and team building opportunities

# SWOT ANALYSIS

## Threats

- **Internal Threats:** early life cycle stage instability, board and volunteer retention, lack of strong financial resources and revenue generating methods
- **Political Climate:** negative impact of social media, amplifies divisive rhetoric, organizational position as non-partisan can make it difficult to comment on specific issues without alienating certain stakeholder groups, current or future proposed social and public policy that combats organizational values

# KEY ISSUES FACING THE ORGANIZATION

A SWOT analysis uncovered  key issues.

These issues: **building stability, identifying, retaining, and leveraging volunteers, and addressing organizational finances** result in goal areas that reflect strategic targets for improvement and innovation between 2020 and 2023.

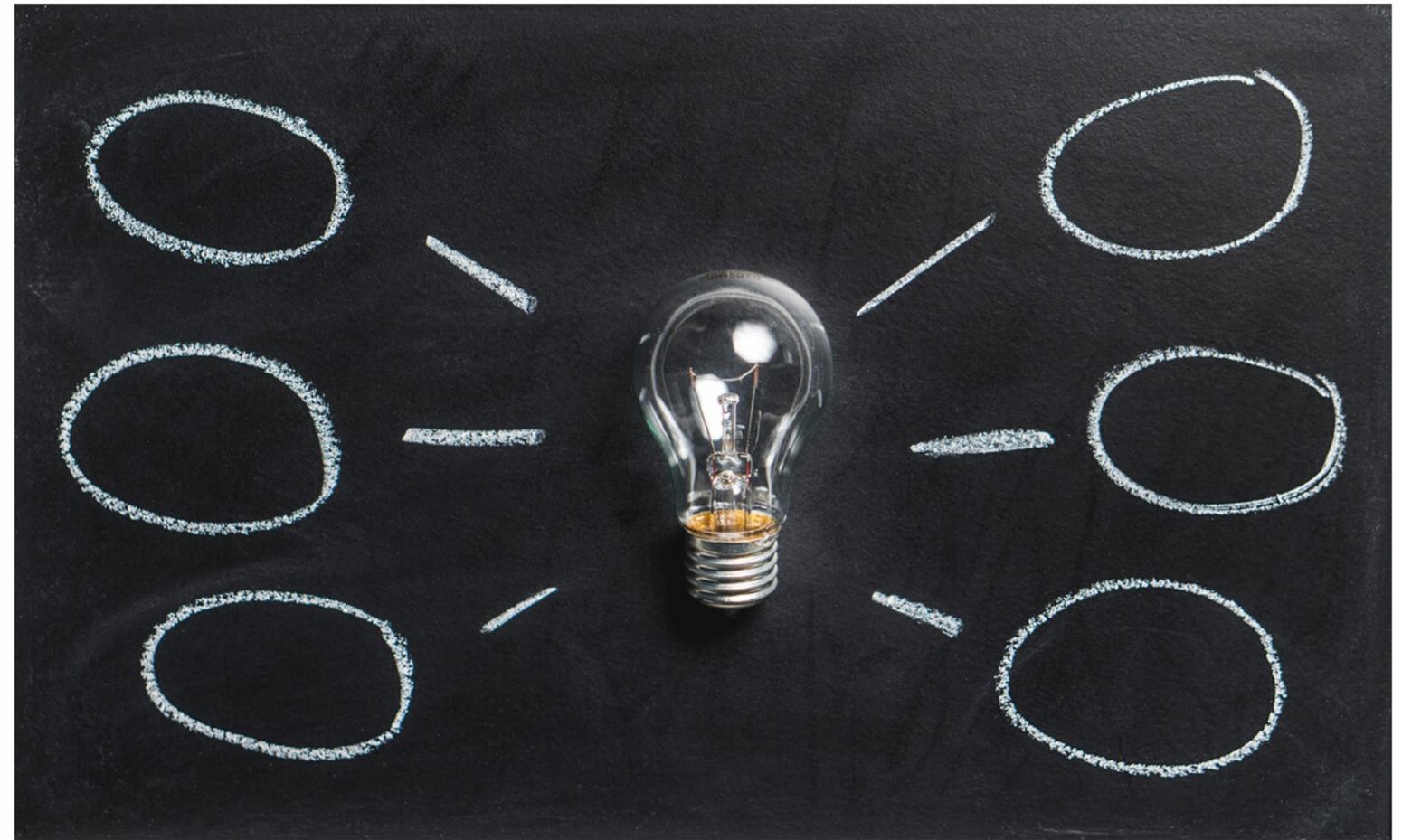
# PEOPLE

Unite by Night requires a consistent, diverse, and dedicated board and volunteer base, necessary to build essential organizational resources: i.e. volunteer time, professional skill, connections, capital. Therefore, the organization must focus on the recruiting, management, and retention of volunteers and board members to support the mission.



# PROCESS

Unite by Night currently possesses a young operational structure. Therefore, the organization must build stability during this precarious time in its organizational life cycle by establishing more structured operations, utilizing trustworthy tools and resources, well established best practices, as well as developing set roles and responsibilities for board members and volunteers.



# PROFIT

Unite by Night currently operates with a lack of steady revenue. Therefore, the organization must aim to develop a strategic approach to generating revenue to support operations, 12 month commitments to community partners, and mini projects.



# TACTICS TO ADDRESS KEY ISSUES | MEASURABLE OUTCOMES FOR SUCCESS

- By 2021, develop a volunteer program by creating and executing plans for recruiting, on boarding, ongoing engagement and educational opportunities, matching volunteers with specific community partner needs and projects
- By 2021, develop a succession plan to address board retention issues, work to grow diversity of Unite by Night's board
- Through 2023, execute annual team building efforts for board members and volunteers to build allegiance and camaraderie, support retention
- Through 2023, develop recruiting marketing materials and ongoing dynamic social media content to promote board, volunteer and mini project opportunities



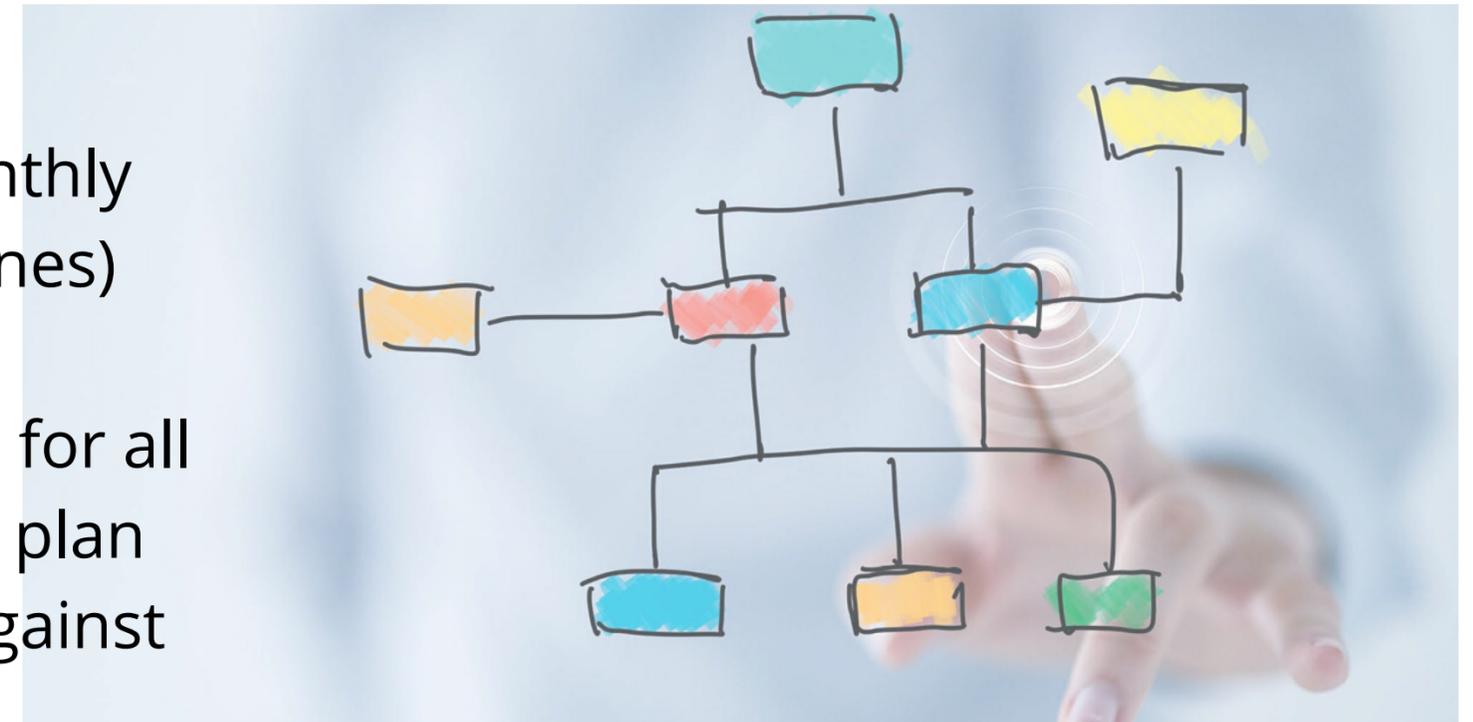
# TACTICS TO ADDRESS KEY ISSUES | MEASURABLE OUTCOMES FOR SUCCESS

- By 2023, build a 150-person volunteer base and the resources required to manage these individuals effectively
- By 2023, develop Unite by Night chapter model for higher education, engage in a memo of understanding (MOU) with local WNY beta test partner to roll out this model
- By 2023, identify grant or corporate funding opportunities to hire management consultant for 2-year contract to help continue to build sustainability and meet strategic plan goals
- Execute all “**People**” tactics, work to establish benchmarks from available metrics, record information, measure and assess progress to establish useful data and intelligence through 2023



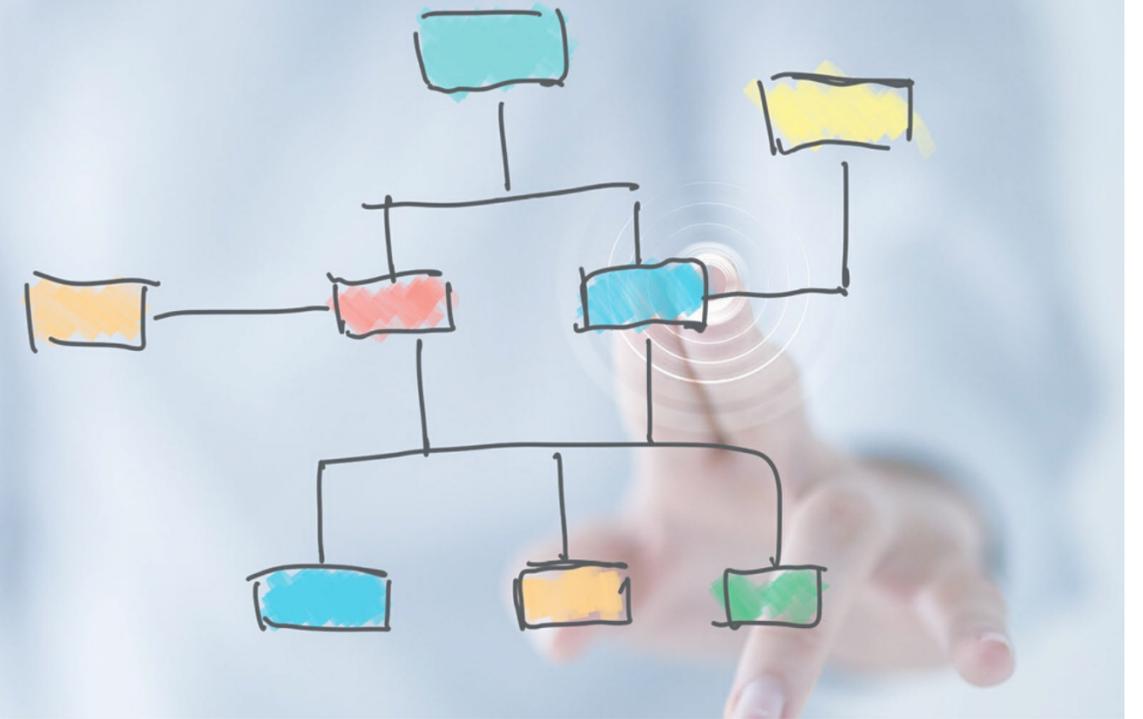
# TACTICS TO ADDRESS KEY ISSUES | MEASURABLE OUTCOMES FOR SUCCESS

- By early 2020, develop and assign organizational board roles & committee responsibilities
- By 2021, develop organizational timeline system (monthly organizational timeline/event timelines/project timelines)
- By 2021, create dashboard, tool, or reporting method for all board members to measure and manage all strategic plan goals, tactics implemented, and the progress made against benchmarks set
- By 2022, create a database model for managing board member and volunteer skills



# TACTICS TO ADDRESS KEY ISSUES | MEASURABLE OUTCOMES FOR SUCCESS

- Through 2023, execute annual community partner selection process, make improvements and adjustments as necessary
- Through 2023, identify and employ operational tools needed for operations (i.e. project management, communication, and financial)
- Execute all “**Process**” tactics, work to establish benchmarks from available metrics, record information, measure and assess progress to establish useful data and intelligence through 2023



# TACTICS TO ADDRESS KEY ISSUES | MEASURABLE OUTCOMES FOR SUCCESS

- By early 2020, establish corporate sponsorship program and investment opportunities, execute outreach to targeted list to solicit support
- By early 2020, design annual impact event, execute annually to generate revenue
- Through 2023, establish fundraising & revenue program including but not limited to:
  - ancillary revenue generating events;
  - annual appeal efforts;
  - grant identification program;
  - fundraising marketing plan
- Execute all “**Profit**” tactics, work to establish benchmarks from available metrics, record information, measure and assess progress to establish useful data and intelligence through 2023





**S T R A T E G I C  
P L A N  
S U M M A R Y**

Unite by Night will work to fulfill its mission and continue to thrive in the coming years by utilizing this strategic plan and leveraging both the internal and external resources available to the organization. In addition, the information and intelligence uncovered during the research phase of this strategic planning process will help inform organizational operations and also heavily influence Unite by Night's approach to leadership, organizational culture, as well as how we go about implementing best practices as seen within the nonprofit sector.

Moreover, better defined organizational mandates, mission statement and values have clarified the path our organization must take in the next three years, and the SWOT analysis conducted helps illuminate some of the opportunities and challenges our organization faces. All of these activities have made clear the key issues of building stability, identifying and retaining board members and volunteers, and addressing organizational finances. The resulting three goal areas reflect strategic targets for improvement and innovation between 2020 and 2023, which our founder group and board members are committed to in order to provide public value to our WNY community and help fulfill our very important mission.



**“DIVERSITY: THE ART  
OF THINKING  
INDEPENDENTLY  
TOGETHER.”**

**—MALCOLM FORBES**



**UNITEBYNIGHT.COM**

