



CityHive

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2027

Land Acknowledgement

CityHive is based on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We also recognize the Katzie, Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem, Qayqayt, Semiahmoo, S'ólh Téméxw (Stó:lō), Stz'uminus, scəwaθenaʔł təməxʷ (Tsawwassen), and all Coast Salish peoples on whose lands we do our work.

As a predominantly settler-led organization, we reflect on the legacy of colonization and the systemic impacts it continues to have on Indigenous peoples. We recognize that city planning, as part of colonial “nation-building,” is a process that disconnects Indigenous peoples from the rich histories, medicines, and cultural practices that are held by the land and stewarded by future generations.

As a non-profit in the civics space, we are inherently complicit in this process, and we are on an ongoing journey as an organization working towards reconciliation, decolonization, and supporting Indigenous sovereignty. We honor the Indigenous communities whose lands we are privileged to live and work on, and we strive to build meaningful, reciprocal, and respectful relationships that support thriving Indigenous futures.

We are committed to being mindful of our role in supporting Indigenous leadership and community building as we continue to grow and collaborate in the work ahead.



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Dear CityHive Community,

As we look back on the past three years, we are proud to reflect on the significant growth and transitions CityHive has undergone. We've expanded from a small team of three to ten dedicated staff, navigated the exit of our founding leader, and continued to grow our impact in new and exciting ways. These changes have been both challenging and inspiring, setting the stage for a new chapter in our journey.

Looking ahead to the next three years, our focus is on building long-term sustainability and deepening our impact. We have engaged extensively with our partners, advisors, funders, and alumni to ensure this new strategic plan reflects our collective vision and strengths. Together, we've identified four new focus areas that not only build on our past successes but also push us to go deeper where our work is most needed. These areas respond to an evolving socio-cultural landscape, one that requires us to stay adaptable in a rapidly changing world.

One key theme that emerged time and time again through our engagement process was the idea of *community*. From our conversations with stakeholders to the input we gathered from our staff, partners, and youth advisors, the word "community" surfaced as a key tenet. It reinforced for us the importance of deepening our connections, nurturing relationships, and creating spaces where all voices are heard and valued. This theme has been at the heart of how we've approached this strategy—our growth, our impact, and our future.

Our plan is designed to be flexible, especially as we recognize the increasing need for democratic and civic engagement. To ensure we remain responsive to both opportunities and challenges, we will review this plan annually and make adjustments as necessary.

We are excited for the road ahead and deeply grateful to have you all along for this journey with us. Together, we will continue to support young people in shaping their cities and communities.

With appreciation,



Rowan Gentleman-Sylvester
Executive Director, CityHive



Dear CityHive Community,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are thrilled to share the new strategic plan for 2025-2027. This plan marks an exciting chapter in our journey to transform the way young people engage in shaping their communities and tackling urban challenges.

CityHive has grown exponentially over the last three years, establishing itself as a key player in boosting youth engagement. Our new strategic plan focuses on four main areas that will guide our efforts over the next three years:

1. **Supporting Youth in Civic Engagement**
2. **Relationships & Community-Building**
3. **Communications, Education, & Storytelling**
4. **Operational Sustainability & Impact Evaluation**

A key priority of our new strategic plan is to bolster the sustainability of our organization, positioning CityHive as a model for other non-profits. We are committed to building a sustainable financial model, diversifying our revenue streams, and enhancing our fundraising capacity. This will enable us to continue delivering high-quality programs, investing in innovation, and responding flexibly to emerging opportunities and challenges.

Furthermore, we are dedicated to reinforcing the importance of justice, equity, decolonization, diversity, and inclusion (JEDDI) principles at a time when this critical work is under threat elsewhere. Our commitment to these values shapes everything we do, ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to engage in civic life and contribute to positive change in their communities.

The Board of Directors fully supports this strategic plan and is confident in the ability of our dedicated staff to implement it successfully. We believe this strategic plan will enable us to create lasting, positive change in our communities and empower young people to take active roles in shaping their cities.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Warm regards,

The CityHive Board of Directors





About CityHive

CityHive is an award-winning, Metro Vancouver-based non-profit organization on a mission to transform the way that young people (ages 13-30) are engaged in shaping their communities: in city planning, decision-making processes, and on pressing urban issues. As a youth-led and youth-run non-profit, we harness the energy, experiences, and perspectives of young people to create solutions to make our cities more just, sustainable, and resilient. We work with civic institutions to make their youth engagement more meaningful and inclusive.

Mission

CityHive's mission is to transform the way young people shape their cities and the civic processes that engage them.

Vision

We envision cities where youth are actively involved in civic planning, shaping, and decision-making. A youth-engaged city is a resilient, sustainable, and livable city—not only for young people, but for all current and future generations.

Guiding Principles

Youth-centred engagement:

We build meaningful relationships with youth (ages 13-30), understand and support the needs of youth, and centre youth in the leadership of our organization and in all programming.

Collaboration:

We are informed by past and ongoing work in our broader community, and we actively seek out opportunities to support and work with other organizations and individuals to strengthen our impact.

Centre underrepresented and systematically excluded voices:

We recognize how systemic racism, colonialism, ableism and other oppressive systems exclude many people from civic engagement on the basis of their identities. We commit to challenging the status quo and creating opportunities for youth that have been most systematically excluded in all of the work that we do.

JEDDI Values

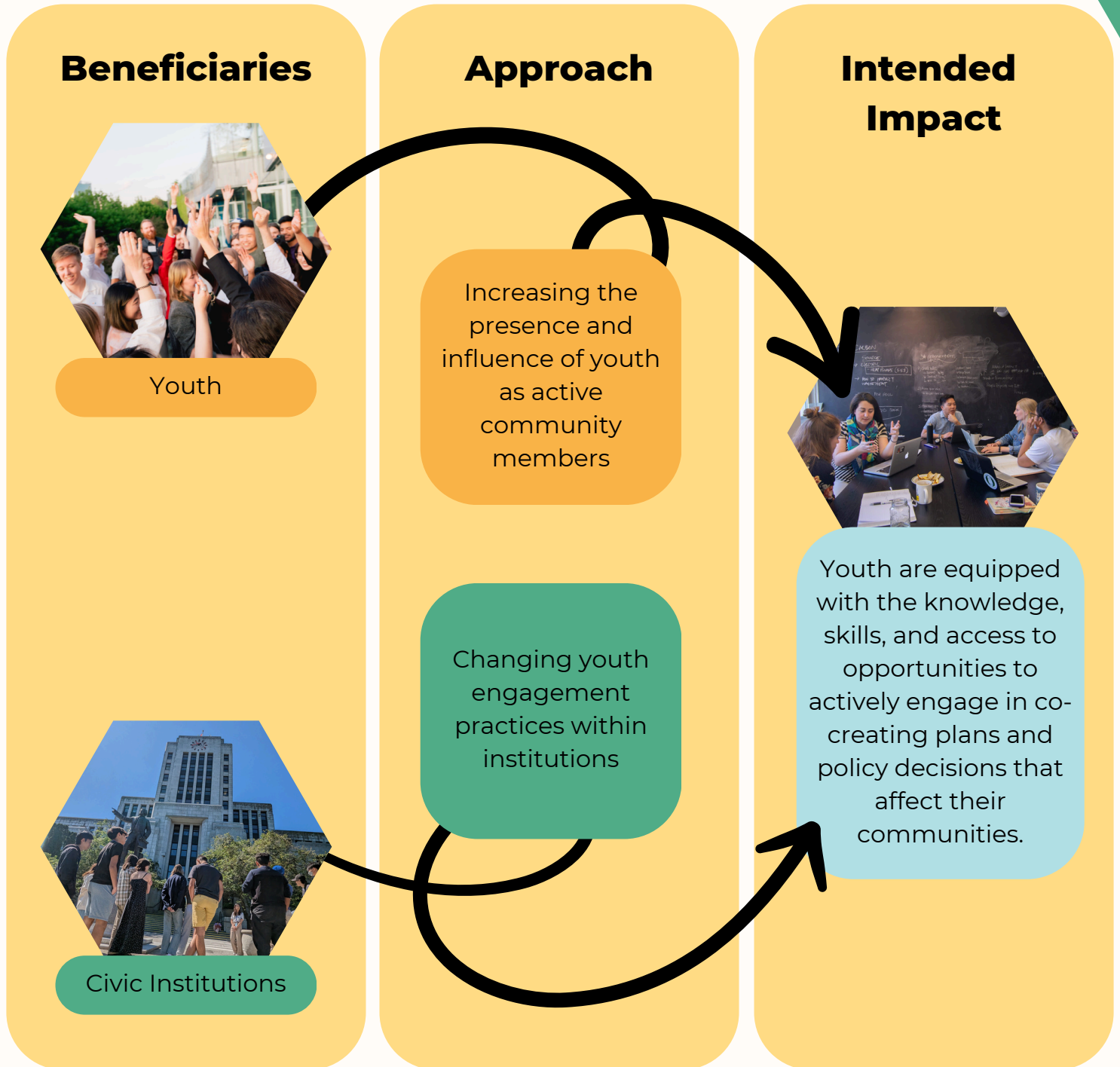
At CityHive, our commitment to Justice, Equity, Decolonization, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDDI) shapes everything we do. These values guide our work to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to engage in civic life and contribute to positive change in their communities.

- J** **Justice** drives our efforts to create a fair and just society where every person, regardless of their background, has access to the same rights, opportunities, and resources. We work to dismantle systems of oppression and advocate for social and political change that benefits all, especially those from equity-denied communities.
- E** **Equity** is central to our approach, recognizing that different individuals and communities face unique challenges. We are committed to providing the necessary support to ensure everyone has the opportunity to succeed, particularly those who have been historically excluded or marginalized.
- D** **Decolonization** is an ongoing process of recognizing and addressing the harms caused by colonial systems, centering Indigenous knowledge, and returning power to Indigenous peoples. We are on an ongoing journey as an organization working towards reconciliation, decolonization, and supporting Indigenous sovereignty. We honor the Indigenous communities whose lands we are privileged to live and work on, and we strive to build meaningful, reciprocal, and respectful relationships that support thriving Indigenous futures.
- D** **Diversity** celebrates the range of identities, perspectives, and experiences that make our communities stronger. We embrace differences in experience and opinion, and believe that diverse voices are essential to creating solutions that reflect the complexity of the world we live in.
- I** **Inclusion** means actively creating spaces where all individuals feel valued and respected. We strive to ensure that all young people, especially those from historically marginalized communities, have the tools and support they need to participate fully in shaping their cities and societies.

Together, these values guide our work, ensuring that we build a more just, equitable, and inclusive society for all.

Theory of Change

Rooted in the work we conducted in 2021, this Theory of Change provides the foundation for our understanding of impact and success in this plan.



Plan Development & Engagement

The development of this strategic plan was shaped by extensive engagement with key stakeholders and a thorough analysis of our impact over the past three years. We believe that a collaborative approach ensures our plan is rooted in the needs of the communities we serve.

To inform the plan, we conducted **interviews** with dozens of individuals, including our partners, funders, alumni, and advisors. These conversations allowed us to gather valuable insights into the current youth engagement landscape and identify ideas for future growth and impact.

In addition to stakeholder engagement, we conducted a **comprehensive analysis of our impact** over the past three years with the support of an evaluation specialist. This analysis helped us understand what has worked well, where we can improve, and how we can better measure our success going forward.

To bring this input together, we hosted a **series of workshops / focus groups** to conduct a sense-making exercise and to dive deeper into specific themes and priorities. These discussions were key to identifying our key decision-points and outstanding questions.

The final stage of our engagement process included a **two-day strategic planning retreat** with our staff, board, and youth advisors. This immersive session allowed us to synthesize all the input we had gathered and align on the key focus areas and strategic priorities for the next three years.

The voices of our stakeholders, along with the findings from our impact analysis, have been integral in shaping this plan. The collective insights we received have been woven into the strategic direction laid out in the following pages, ensuring that our path forward is both informed and inclusive.

Phase 1:

Staff, board, and CHYA conduct sector research interviews + evaluation of past programs and projects.

Phase 2:

A series of workshops + group retreat to compile what we heard and to discuss key emerging questions.

Phase 3:

Compile discussions and decisions into a clear Strategic Plan and validating it with partners.

Finally,

we share it out with our community!





Strategic Priorities

& Key Focus Areas



Overview: Strategic Priorities & Focus Areas (2025-2027)

Supporting Youth in Civic Engagement

- Invest in existing, successful, and meaningful civic literacy and engagement programs
- Develop new content and approaches to support youth in navigating complex conversations and issues
- Deepen impact outcomes for priority youth communities
- Improve alumni engagement and stewardship

Relationships & Community-Building

- Increase connections and capacity to engage with partner organizations
- Develop new partnerships and deepen existing relationships with organizations serving priority youth communities.
- Improve our understanding of our role as a predominantly settler-led organization in decolonizing civic engagement/city planning through meaningful relationship building with local First Nations and urban Indigenous peoples

Communications, Education, and Storytelling

- Build capacity for responsive communications about current events and issues
- Create new avenues for information sharing and thought leadership related to youth engagement
- Tell stories about youth engagement, young leaders, and impactful youth advocacy

Operational Sustainability & Impact Evaluation

- Invest in CityHive's Consulting & Engagement arm
- Develop policies and procedures to support organizational growth and operational excellence
- Develop and implement a new evaluation strategy to improve capacity to track and monitor project/program impact

Strategic Enablers



Diverse and Representative Workforce



Financial Sustainability



Adaptability

Supporting Youth in Civic Engagement

Invest in existing, successful, and meaningful civic literacy and engagement programs

We will continue to strengthen and expand our current civic engagement programs that have demonstrated success and positive outcomes - including an ongoing emphasis on skill-building and supporting intersectional communities. This includes programs like CityShapers and Urban ReVision, and we will continue to lean into program models that have proven to be impactful. We will prioritize programs that help youth connect to their communities and civic institutions, centering JEDDI principles and accessibility for participants.

Develop new content and approaches to support youth in navigating complex conversations and issues

As the socio-political landscape evolves, it is crucial to equip youth with the skills to engage in difficult conversations about complex issues. We will develop new educational content, workshops, and resources aimed at helping young people navigate conflict, engage in respectful discourse, and find common ground in challenging discussions. This will also include supporting youth to become convenors, facilitators and advocates in their own communities.

Deepen impact outcomes for priority youth communities

We are committed to ensuring that our programs create deep, lasting impact across all youth communities. Our focus will be on tailoring engagement strategies to meet the needs of diverse youth communities, including those who have traditionally been underrepresented in civic processes, such as low-income youth, racialized youth, and those facing systemic barriers to participation. We will use targeted outreach, mentorship, and community-based approaches to deepen the impact for these groups.

Improve alumni engagement and stewardship

Building a strong and lasting relationship with program alumni is critical for long-term impact. We will enhance our alumni engagement efforts through regular communication, networking opportunities, and career development support. This will help maintain a connection to the CityHive community, support alumni's continued leadership, and encourage them to stay involved in the organization as mentors, advisors, or future funders.



Relationships & Community-Building

Increase connections and capacity to engage with partner organizations

We recognize the power of collaboration and will work to deepen existing partnerships while establishing new ones. By expanding our network, we can tap into new opportunities, share resources, and align our efforts with others working toward similar goals. We will prioritize building stronger relationships with both grassroots organizations and larger institutions that have a shared interest in youth civic engagement.

Build new and deepen existing relationships with partners serving priority youth communities

A core part of our mission is to reach youth from equity-deserving communities, including newcomers, Black, Indigenous, and youth from other racialized backgrounds – in community and in the classroom. We will prioritize forming new partnerships with organizations that serve these groups (community organizations, youth-serving groups, educators, among many others), ensuring that our programs reflect their needs, challenges, and aspirations. This will also involve ensuring that our staff and leadership are reflective of the diversity we seek to support. These partnerships will complement other organizational goals, including expanding program reach, improving program resources, and knowledge-sharing.

Improve our understanding of our role as a predominantly settler-led organization in decolonizing civic engagement/city planning through meaningful relationship building with local First Nations and urban Indigenous peoples

We acknowledge the importance of understanding and respecting our role as city-shapers within a city that is built upon unceded Indigenous lands. To this end, we will continue to deepen our understanding of decolonial practices and work towards building stronger, reciprocal relationships with local Indigenous peoples, including the host First Nations and urban Indigenous communities. This work includes centering Indigenous perspectives of civics and city-shaping within our programs, supporting local Indigenous youth leadership, and challenging the systemic exclusion of Indigenous peoples in civics and climate justice spaces. This strategy builds on existing initiatives, including working with Indigenous consultants and advisors, partnering to deliver project with local Indigenous partners, and embedding Indigenous people, stories, and case studies into program materials.



Communications, Education, and Storytelling

Build capacity for responsive communications about current events and issues

In an increasingly fast-paced world, we need to be prepared to respond quickly and effectively to current events, issues, and crises that impact our communities. This strategy will focus on developing our internal capacity for timely, clear, and impactful communication about these events. We will create resources, toolkits, and messaging frameworks that allow us to stay responsive while aligning with our mission and values.

Create new avenues for information sharing and thought leadership related to youth engagement

As experts in youth engagement, we are uniquely positioned to share knowledge and resources that help others better engage with young people in meaningful ways. We will develop new avenues for thought leadership, such as webinars, workshops, published articles, and partnerships with media outlets. This will elevate CityHive's role as a go-to resource on youth engagement at both the local and national levels.

Tell stories about youth engagement, young leaders, and impactful youth advocacy

Youth-driven change deserves to be celebrated and shared. We will prioritize storytelling as a means to highlight the incredible work being done by youth in civic engagement and advocacy. Through blogs, social media, videos, and public events, we will amplify youth voices and showcase their successes in creating positive change in their communities. These stories will inspire others and provide a platform for youth leadership.



Operational Sustainability & Impact Evaluation

Invest in CityHive's Consulting & Engagement arm

CityHive has a strong track record in youth engagement, and we will leverage this expertise to create new revenue streams. We commit to investing capacity and resources into growing this arm of our work to improve business development processes, increase client base, and widen the reach of our services. This strategy has the two-fold impact of meaningfully impacting the youth engagement practices within institutions (our main priority), while also improving our organization sustainability through unrestricted revenue generation.

Develop policies and procedures to support organizational growth and operational excellence

As CityHive grows, it is essential that we build strong internal structures and policies to ensure smooth operations. We will invest in creating clear policies and procedures for finance, human resources, program management, and non-profit best practices. These systems will not only enhance organizational efficiency but also position us for scalability and sustainability in the future.

Develop and implement a new evaluation strategy to improve capacity to track and monitor project/program impact

We will prioritize improving our evaluation strategy to ensure that we can effectively track and assess the impact of our work. This will involve designing new metrics and frameworks for evaluation, including both short-term outputs and long-term outcomes. By investing in the capacity to monitor our programs and learn from the data, we can make data-driven decisions and continually improve our programs.



Strategic Enablers

Our success in achieving our strategic priorities over the next three years depends on several critical enablers. These are the foundational elements that will allow us to be effective, sustainable, and responsive to the changing needs of the communities we serve:



Diverse and Representative Workforce

At CityHive, we believe that the best solutions come from those directly impacted by the issues at hand. We are committed to fostering a workforce that is diverse, inclusive, and reflective of the youth we serve. By building a "by youth, for youth" approach, we ensure that our programs are designed and led by individuals who bring lived experience, diverse perspectives, and a deep understanding of the challenges our communities face. Our work is driven by the principle of "nothing about us without us," ensuring that the voices of equity-deserving youth are at the heart of every decision.



Financial Sustainability

To ensure our long-term impact and growth, we are committed to building and maintaining a sustainable financial model. This involves diversifying our revenue streams, which includes seeking new partnerships, expanding our consulting and engagement arm, and enhancing our fundraising capacity. By strengthening our financial resilience, we can continue to deliver high-quality programs, invest in innovation, and respond flexibly to emerging opportunities and challenges.



Adaptability

In an ever-changing world, our ability to adapt is critical to sustaining our relevance and effectiveness. We will remain responsive to the evolving needs of our youth, partners, and communities, particularly as we face new social, political, and environmental challenges. Our strategy will be dynamic, with regular reviews and adjustments to ensure that we are always prepared to respond to new opportunities and address any obstacles that arise. This adaptability will allow us to stay ahead of emerging trends and continue to create meaningful impact in the lives of young people.



Tracking Our Progress

To ensure that our strategic plan remains relevant, effective, and responsive to changes in our community and environment, we have developed a relatively straightforward tracking and evaluation plan. This approach includes operational planning, tracking our impact on youth, partners, and the wider community (rooted in key benchmarks and knowledge areas), sharing back, and embedding programs to match. Progress measurement includes:

Annual Planning

Each year, CityHive staff, led by the Executive Director, will develop an annual plan that outlines how each department will operationalize these strategic goals and priorities. This annual plan will be shared with the Board of Directors and Youth Advisory for reference, and will provide the key metrics by which the strategic plan is actioned. Staff will reflect on progress and goals on a quarterly basis.

Annual Impact Reporting and General Meeting

We will conduct annual Impact Reporting to reflect on our Strategic Plan progress, and share it out digitally, and with our membership during our Annual General Meeting (AGM). This review will serve as a dedicated time for assessing our progress, identifying areas for improvement, and recalibrating priorities where necessary. Data will be collected and shared from impact and evaluation tracking processes as well as quarterly and annual staff reflections. The review will involve key stakeholders, including staff, board members, and youth advisors, ensuring that we have diverse perspectives on our progress.

Learning and Adaptation

One of the key aspects of our evaluation process is learning. We will treat our evaluation as an ongoing opportunity to adapt and refine our approach. The insights gathered will be used to update our strategic plan annually, ensuring that we stay agile in the face of changing conditions and continue to deliver meaningful impact.



Acknowledgements

We want to thank each and every person who helped shape this new strategic plan. This phenomenal group includes (but isn't limited to) staff, board members, advisors, funders, alumni, partners, facilitators and contractors.

Thank you for your thoughtful insights, reflections, and recommendations. Our community is what shapes and guides this work and we are grateful for your contributions and continued support.

Here's to the years ahead!

