**STRATEGIC PLAN** 

2024-2026

# **TORCH LITERARY ARTS**



**3-YEAR ASPIRATIONAL VISION** Growth and Sustainability

## WWW.TORCHLITERARYARTS.ORG





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#### TORCH

## **LEADERSHIP MESSAGE**

Our Strategic Plan 2024-2026 is a roadmap to sustain and elevate Torch Literary Arts for generations of Black women writers and a world of readers. The plan offers a clear path forward with measurable goals and objectives for staff, board members, stakeholders, and volunteers.

The last 17 years have shown us we are resilient and dedicated to delivering impactful programs as a global literary resource and destination. Our history has also shown us where we can grow and improve the organization to best serve our community. This year, we will move boldly with a clear vision of what we want to accomplish in the next three years for the advancement of Torch Literary Arts. This will be accomplished through extensive engagement with our board, our staff, funders, and the community.

During this time, we will continue to work collaboratively to ensure a greater impact across the literary landscape for a more equitable and inclusive representation of Black women writers.



#### Amanda Johnston, Founder and Executive Director Torch Literary Arts



Bridget Samuel, BSW, MS, ODCC, Prosci© Change Management & Human Centered Design Practitioner <u>VESTEDin™ Consulting Group, LLC</u>, MBE, WBE

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## BACKGROUND



#### MISSION

To promote the work of Black women by publishing contemporary creative writing by emerging and experienced writers alike, to archive contributors' literary work for posterity and educational purposes, and to provide resources and opportunities for the advancement of Black women through literary arts.

#### **DEIA STATEMENT**

Torch Literary Arts centers Black women within their complex, intersecting identities. We provide inclusive and accessible programs to our community at large and we are committed to leveraging our unique platforms to help create positive change.

#### WE BELIEVE

- We believe that creative writing by Black women is valuable and necessary.
- We believe in preserving our literary legacy by working across generations.
- We believe that supporting creative writing adds to the cross-cultural appreciation of the arts.
- We believe in utilizing current technology to connect our work to a broader audience.
- We believe in meaningful collaboration based on respect, creativity, and freedom.
- We believe in the power of community.







TORCH Strategic Plan 2024-2026

#### STRATEGY AT A GLANCE THEMES 2024-2026

In the next three years, Torch Literary Arts will focus on collaborative efforts to enhance their influence across the literary landscape, striving to provide resources and opportunities for the advancement of Black women writers and all readers. To realize this vision, four pillars of focus were identified, each with its unique objectives and key results. These pillars encompass a broad spectrum of efforts including stabilizing financial resources, raising organizational awareness, and strengthening board engagement and governance. As Torch embarks on this transformative journey, continued monitoring and evaluation, using specific numerical, financial, and qualitative milestones, will be critical to ensure successful outcomes and to gauge progress toward organizational goals.







Contributors: Torch Literary Arts Staff, Board of Directors, Funders, and Community Partners



#### PILLAR 1: DIVERSIFY AND STRENGTHEN THE BLACK WOMEN WRITERS COMMUNITY

Torch will actively promote and amplify the voices of Black women writers in order to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and offer a diverse range of perspectives. Creating platforms, events, and opportunities specifically tailored to celebrate Black women writers fosters a supportive network where people can share experiences, collaborate, and inspire one another. Ultimately, a greater outreach, audience, and partnership will help spread Torch's unique and imperative message.

#### **OBJECTIVE 1.1**

#### Expand Torch's presence and influence in Texas statewide

#### **Key Results:**

- 1 program and initiative in the Dallas Metroplex annually
- 1 program and initiative in Greater Houston annually
- 1 program and initiative in San Antonio (Bexar County) annually
- 15 programs and initiatives in Austin (Central Texas) annually
- programs and initiatives in Texas increased by 20%
- 1 annual United States retreat
- hold at least 18 on-site events across the state each year

#### **OBJECTIVE 1.2**

#### Prioritize diversity and inclusion efforts

#### **Key Results:**

- obtain a comfortable level of intergenerational diversity of program participants
- 20% increase in the number of Black Women Writers actively engaged annually
- increase representation of marginalized communities within the diaspora
- attain an 85% participant satisfaction rating for the diversity and inclusiveness observed within Torch's community
- create 1 alternative way for writers to submit their work to increase accessibility
- participant engagement from all 50 states in programs and initiatives by December 31, 2026





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#### PILLAR 1: DIVERSIFY AND STRENGTHEN THE BLACK WOMEN WRITERS COMMUNITY CONTINUED...

#### **OBJECTIVE 1.3**

#### Expand presence outside of the United States

#### **Key Results:**

- 3 new values-aligned partnerships outside of the United States over three years
- 1 program and initiative outside of the United States annually
- 1 international virtual collaborative program
- 4 monthly features in Torch Magazine from outside of the United States
- double global website traffic
- 1 international writer's retreat annually
- achieve a 20% increase in international active participants over three years



This year, we will move boldly with a clear vision of what we want to accomplish in the next three years.

Amanda Johnston



Bridget Samuel, BSW, MS, ODCC, Prosci© Change Management & Human Centered Design Practitioner <u>VESTEDin™ Consulting Group, LLC</u>, MBE, WBE

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#### PILLAR 2: FINANCIAL STABILITY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening financial sustainability is essential for Torch to ensure the organization's resilience. We will focus on bolstering resources to sustain long-term operations and establishing a solid foundation for continuous growth and adaptability.

#### **OBJECTIVE 2.1**

#### Improve financial sustainability to ensure long-term organizational resilience

#### **Key Results:**

- develop a fundraising plan by Q3 2024
- obtain an annual budget of \$1 million by 2027
- develop endowment guidelines by Q3 2026

#### **OBJECTIVE 2.2**

#### Diversify revenue sources

#### **Key Results:**

- increase individual donor contributions by 15% over the previous year
- raise 30% annually from grants (including government and foundations)
- maintain 10% of annual revenue from corporate sponsorships
- secure 3 multi-year grant commitments by December 31, 2026
- diversify means of receiving donations

#### **OBJECTIVE 2.3**

## Strengthen resources to support operations over the long term

#### **Key Results:**

- secure in-kind donations equivalent to \$25,000
- maintain a cash reserve equivalent to 6 months of operating expenses
- create a gift acceptance policy
- establish 5 educational institution partnerships for the Administrative Fellows Program
- 25 partnerships with values-aligned community-based organizations by December 31, 2026



#### PILLAR 3: INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Torch aims to better fulfill its mission by improving impact and capacity. Key results for these goals include expanding staff, securing a physical location, and gathering participant feedback. Additionally, active board engagement and effective governance are vital for organizational success. The board plays a central role in setting strategic direction, overseeing policies, and ensuring Torch remains aligned with its mission. Our organization seeks to magnify its impact through these endeavors and establish a stronger, more adaptable foundation.

#### **OBJECTIVE 3.1**

#### Enhance organizational capacity

#### Key Results:

- recruit and onboard 4 full-time staff with comprehensive benefits packages
- implement a pay raise and bonus structure by Q4 2025 to reward performance and retention
- allocate 2% of the annual budget to support the personal and professional development of staff, fostering growth and skill enhancement
- establish and finalize a comprehensive succession plan to ensure leadership continuity and stability by Q2 2026
- secure physical location by Q1 2026
- implement a modern technology infrastructure to streamline operations and improve efficiency by Q3 2026

#### **OBJECTIVE 3.2**

#### Measure organizational impact

#### Key Results:

- showcase real-life stories and case studies of individuals or communities positively impacted by Torch
- anecdotal feedback on Torch's inspiration on future generations of Black Women pursuing careers in writing and literature
- measure Torch's contribution to creating a more diverse and representative literary canon, benefitting readers, scholars, and educators
- collect ongoing participant feedback, with 90% expressing a strong likelihood to recommend Torch

## PILLAR 3: INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTINUED...

#### **OBJECTIVE 3.3**

#### Strengthen board engagement and governance

#### **Key Results:**

- achieve 80% board meeting attendance at each meeting
- \$35,000 is raised through board-led campaigns annually
- every year, 100% of board members are donors
- 2 board development activities with 100% participation annually
- secure at least 2 new board members by Q4 2024
- advisory board is reactivated by Q1 2025
- activate and create board committees for monthly meetings (e.g., executive, finance, governance, fundraising) by Q2 2024
- 1 annual board retreat with 90% participation



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## **STRATEGIES** PILLAR 4: BRAND RECOGNITION

Brand recognition is essential for our growth because it fosters trust, credibility, and loyalty. A reputable brand attracts top talent and improves marketing efficiency, making our promotional activities and event attendance more impactful. Torch is committed to becoming a well-known and trusted resource within the community, further reinforcing our mission.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4.1**

#### Raise organizational visibility

#### **Key Results:**

- create a marketing plan by Q4 2024
- newsletter engagement increases by 25% annually
- an annual impact report is written and distributed widely by Q1 of each year
- 3 YouTube videos posted per quarter for total of 12 annually
- gather 5 testimonials every quarter, 60 over 3 years, and share widely

#### **OBJECTIVE 4.2**

#### Attain public recognition

#### **Key Results:**

- receive nominations for literary awards over three years
- Torch featured writers acknowledge Torch in bios and press
- 10 mainstream media engagements or features over three years
- launch Torch Award Series by Q4 2024
- named one of the Best Places to Work in Austin
- creation of Ambassadors Circle by December 31, 2026









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## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Torch Literary Arts' Strategic Plan*, including the operational *Strategy Map*, represents a dynamic roadmap that guides the organization through an ever-evolving literary landscape. Both challenges and opportunities will be encountered throughout the plan period, and Torch's commitment to adapting and modifying these strategies is paramount to overall success. This plan is not a static document; it is a living, breathing framework that allows for agility and responsiveness to the needs of the communities served.

As Torch moves forward, documenting the continuous progress of the *Strategic Plan* through the active use of the operational *Strategy Map*, monitoring emerging trends, and engaging with stakeholders can help ensure that strategic objectives remain relevant and practical. Torch's willingness and ability to adapt and modify strategies in real-time is a testament to its commitment to fulfilling its mission.

## **PROJECT LEAD**

Bridget Y Samuel, she/her, describes herself as a *Capacity Building Navigator* for mission-driven organizations specializing in designing and aligning strategy, succession 'roadmapping,' and facilitation. She founded VESTEDin™ Consulting Group, LLC, to share lessons learned from 20+ years of 'lived- experience' in social work, nonprofits, and philanthropy. Her unwavering passion for guiding powerbuilding in individuals, teams, and organizations to meet aspirational goals resulted in an appearance on the NBC Nightly News and a quote in the New York Times.



The Houston native and University of Texas alumna has served in leadership capacities on local, state, and national boards and provided direct day-to-day oversight to administrative, operational, and programmatic staff. She has extensive experience working with and advocating for marginalized communities and centering justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in organizational policies, processes, and practices.

Bridget is a "generalist" (context vs. content) with breadth and depth, working with diverse individuals, communities all over the U.S., and nonprofit sectors, including health, social services, social justice, arts, and philanthropy. She has a broad perspective to see the bigger picture, navigate vague or poorly defined situations, and derive new patterns.

She is a certified organizational development (O.D.), human-centered design, and change management practitioner and holds certificates for Lean Six Sigma and True Colors© personality assessments. Bridget enjoys yoga, dancing, painting, long meditative walks, and playing with her rescue dog, "Twinkie." She resides on what was the native land of the Karankawa tribe in Houston, Texas.



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## **APPENDIX A**

#### **INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES REPORT**





TORCH

#### **APPENDIX B**

TORCH Strategic Plan 2024-2026

TORCH

<b>OPERATIONAL</b>	<b>STRATEGY MAP</b>	2024-2026 I	DASHBOARD
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The matrix is a tool to help measure and track your organization's OKRs (Objectives the organization's goals and objectives.	and Key Results). This visual way to	The matrix is a tool to help measure and track your organization's OKRs (Objectives and Key Results). This visual way to track your OKRs allows you to quickly and easily identify progress and areas of improvement regarding the organization's goals and objectives.
PILLAR 1 OBJECTIVES	January 1, 2024	, OKR End Date: December 31, 2026
Average Progress 0%		
Objective Progress Objective 1.1 Expand Torch's presence and influence in Texas statewide Objective 1.2 Prioritize diversity and inclusion efforts Objective 1.3 Expand presence outside of the United States	0% 0%	
PILLAR 2 OBJECTIVES		
Average Progress 0%		
Objective Progress Objective 2.1 Improve financial sustainability to ensure long-term organization Objective 2.2 Diversify revenue sources Objective 2.3 Strengthen resources to support operations over the long term	0% 0% 0%	
PILLAR 3 OBJECTIVES		
Average Progress 0%		
<b>Objective Progress</b> Objective 3.1 Enhance organizational capacity Objective 3.2 Measure organizational impact Objective 3.3 Strengthen board engagement and governance	0% 0% 0%	
PILLAR 4 OBJECTIVES		
Objective Progress Objective 4.1 Raise organizational visibility Objective 4.2 Attain public recoanition and praise	%0 %0	

# TORCH Strategic Plan 2024-2026

#### TORCH

APPENDIX B
OPERATIONAL STRATEGY MAP 2024-2026

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	Objective 3.1 Enhance organizational canacity		ſ	8						
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			•	5		Key Result I.I.		• •		
Key Result 3.1.2	implement a pay raise and bonus structure by Q4 2025 to reward performance and retention	-	0	жо	12/31/2025	Voly Desult 11.2	i program and initiations in San Antonia (Bover Countri) amountu			
	allocate 2% or \$ of the annual budget to support the personal and professional			1	and and and a	A RESULT 11.0		•	+	
Key Result 3.1.3	development of staff, fostering growth and skill enhancement annually	\$10,000	•	8	12/31/2026	Key Result 11.4	is brograms and intracross in Auson (Central I taxus) annually	ę		
Key Result 3.1.4	establish and finalize a comprehensive succession plan to ensure leadership continuity and stability by 02 2026	-	0	20%	05/29/2026	Key Result 1.1.5	programs and initiatives in Texos increased by 20% or # (#how many is 20% over 3 years?, then place that number in the target cell, 30 is a plug number) over 3 years	30	•	0% 12/31/2026
Kay Deepth 315	eaning interestion hu (1) 2028	-	•	ð	achelis/shae	Key Result 1.1.6	1 annual US retreat		•	0% 12/31/2026
	implement a modern technology infrastructure to streamline operations and improve					Key Result 1.1.7	hold at least 18 on-site events across the state each year	2	•	0% 12/31/2026
Key Result 3.1.6	efficiency by Q3 2026	-	•	8	09/30/2026		Actionality of the advance of the second function of the second		ľ	
	Ab to above a to be a second second second to second the second						Objective Liz Prioritize diversity and inclusion efforts		ł	
	Objective 3.2 Measure organizational impact			8		Key Result 1.2.1	obtain comfortable level of intergenerational diversity of program participants	-	0	0% 06/30/2025
Key Result 3.2.1	showcase real-life stories and case studies of individuals or communities positively impacted by Torch annually	m	0	2%	12/31/2026	Key Result 1.2.2	20% increase or #? in the number of Black Women Writers actively engaged annually	0	•	0% 12/31/2026
Key Result 3.2.2	gather anecdotal feedback on Torch's inspiration on future generations of Black Women pursuing careers in writing and literature annualiv		0	20	12/31/2026	Key Result 1.2.3	feature discibled, queer, or other underrepresented Black Women Writers in at least 5% or #? of programs and initiatives annually		•	0% 12/31/2026
	determine how to measure Torch's contribution to creating a more diverse and				and and and a	Key Result 12.4	attain an 85% participant satisfaction rating for the diversity and inclusiveness observed within Torch's community by December 31, 2024	-	•	0% 12/31/2026
Key Result 3.2.3	representative literary canon, benefitting readers, scholars, and educators	-		ŝ	6707/ns/m				1	
Key Result 3.2.4	collect ongoing participant feedback, with 90% expressing a strong likelihood to recommend forch annually	8	•	х	12/31/2026	Key Result 12.6 Key Result 12.6	create I alternative way to writers to submit their work for states outside fraces, within the US, with participant engagement in programs and for instances hv 1731/2026	- 9	• •	0% 03/31/2026 0% 12/31/2026
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I'C'C YIDEAN	Linning annaism Bunasin nange eas agus d'ungalight	,	,	5	or not lead to	Key Result L3.	3 new values-aligned partnerships outside of the US over three years			
Key Result 3.3.2	\$35,000 is raised through board-led campaigns annually for a total of at least \$105,000 over 3 years	\$105,000	•	20%	12/31/2026	Key Result 1.3.2	1 program and initiative outside of the US annually			
Key Result 3.3.3	every year, 100% of board members are donors	m	•	XO	12/31/2026	Key Result 1.3.3	I international virtual collaborative program			0% 12/31/2026
Key Result 3.3.4	2 board development activities with 100% participation annually	9	•	<b>%</b> 0	12/31/2026	Key Result 13.4	4 monthly reduces outside of the United States of 144 over three years	<u>.</u>		
Key Result 3.3.5	secure at least 2 new board members by Q4 2024	2	•	20	12/31/2024	Key Result 13.6	uouure giouui weusite uuriik. 1 international writer's retreat annuallu			
Key Result 3.3.6	advisory board is reactivated by Q1 2025	-	•	XO	02/28/2025	Key Result 1.3.7	achieve a 20% increase in international active participants over 3 years	50		
Key Result 3.3.7	activate and create board committees for monthly meetings (e.g., executive, finance,	-	•	20	06/28/2024		PILLAR 2 - Financial Stability and Resource Development	Target	Pro	ress Deor
Kou Doouth 3 3 8	guvernance, runar using) of 42 2024		•	ę	Benchelet			Ī	ľ	h
Lesur 2.3.0			,	5	0707/10/71		Objective 2.1 Improve financial sustainability to ensure long-term organizational resilience		•	%0
	PILLAR 4 - Brand Recognition	Target		Progress	Deadline	Key Result 2.1.1	develop a fundraising plan by Q3 2024	-	•	0% 08/29/2025
	Objactive 4.1 Briss commissional visibility			2		Key Result 2.1.2	obtain an annual budget of \$1 million by 12/31/2026 \$1	\$1,000,000	•	0% 12/31/2026
Kev Result 4.1.1	create a marketina pian by 04 2024	-	•	5 8	12/31/2024	Key Result 21.3	develop endowment guidelines by Q3 2026	-	•	0% 09/30/2026
							Objective 2.2 Diversify revenue sources		•	0%
Key Result 4.1.2	newsletter engagement or open rate increase by 25% or #? annually	2175	•	ž	12/31/2026	Key Result 2.2.1	increase individual donor contributions by 15% over the previous year		•	0% 12/31/2026
Key Result 4.1.3	an annual impact report is written and distributed widely by Ql of each year		•	жо	03/31/2026	Key Result 2.2.2	maintain 30% annual ratio from grants (including government and foundations)		•	0% 12/31/2026
Key Result 4.1.4	3 YouTube videos posted per quarter for total of 12 annually	36	•	0%	12/31/2026	Key Result 2.2.3	maintain a 10% annual ratio of revenue from corporate sponsorships		•	0% 12/31/2026
Key Result 4.1.5	gather 5 testimonials every quarter, 60 over 3 years, and share widely	60	•	×0	12/31/2026	Key Result 2.2.4	secure 3 multi-year grant commitments by 12/31/2026	3	•	0% 12/31/2026
				l		Key Result 2.2.5	raise \$ 15,000 annually from international sources	\$45,000	•	0% 12/31/2026
	Objective 4.2 Attain public recognition and praise			%		Key Result 2.2.6	diversify means of receiving donations	-	•	0% 12/31/2026
Key Result 4.2.1	3 nominations for literary awards over three years	3	•	%0	12/31/2026					
Key Result 4.2.2	at least 15 featured writers acknowledge Torch in 2024, 2025, and 2026	45	•	0%	12/31/2026		E L			<b>%</b> 0
Key Result 4.2.3	10 mainstream media engagements or features over three years	10	•	2%	12/31/2026	Key Kesult 23.1	2	\$25,000		
Key Result 4.2.4	launch Torch Award Series by Q4 2024	-	•	жо	12/31/2024	Key Result 2.3.2	maintain a cash reserve equivalent to 6 months of operating expenses annually			
Key Result 4.2.5	named one the the Best Places to Work by the Austin Business Journal by 12/31/2026	-	•	20%	12/31/2026	Key Result 2.3.3	create a gifts acceptance policy	-	+	
	Princeds of York some set industrial (Associate (Association of industrial Association (Association))					Key Result 2.3.4	establish 5 educational institution partnerships for internship pipeline	5	•	0% 12/31/2026
Key Result 4.2.6	Frietida di Toton serve da Ambdasdoora (Creditori di Ambdasduora Circle) by the end of									