



LIGHTHOUSE
WRITERS WORKSHOP

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2028

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“Looking at these stars suddenly dwarfed my own troubles and all the gravities of terrestrial life. I thought of their unfathomable distance, and the slow inevitable drift of their movements out of the unknown past into the unknown future.”

–*The Time Machine*, by H. G. Wells

I won't pretend the future feels entirely certain or known right now—but I am hopeful, because I believe in what Lighthouse is becoming. My conviction hasn't wavered: everyone has a story to tell, and the right community can help them tell it. We need that now more than ever.

It's taken a few years, but we're fully settled into our home at 3844 York Street. Our programs continue to grow and diversify, with new offerings such as Portfolio Year and Body of Words, a series of popular weekend mini festivals, and a community that seems hungrier than ever to connect, share, and find a little refuge from the noise of the world. Writers and readers are showing up, and not just for craft.

And while the future may seem uncertain, we've been making plans. This year marks the launch of a new three-year strategic framework—our first at 3844 York Street.

Over the course of a year-and-a-half, Lighthouse board and staff worked closely together, gathering for several retreats where we explored what the future might hold for the literary arts here in Denver and beyond. We took an honest look at what Lighthouse does well, and what it can do better. We conducted a deep analysis of the opportunities and challenges we're facing (and might face), and we collected two comprehensive surveys—one from the wider community, and one from our outstanding faculty.

What the data told us: our programming is top-notch, our faculty is exceptional, and the generously spirited community at Lighthouse is what makes it singular. Also: people are worried about the future of literature. And long-term sustainability for arts organizations, broadly defined, is a perennial concern.

The plan we came up with rests on four pillars:

- Pillar 1: Focus on Organizational Sustainability and Growth
- Pillar 2: Continued Programmatic Excellence and Creativity
- Pillar 3: Supporting and Expanding Community Strength and Resilience
- Pillar 4: Build Reputation and Reach—and Be a Powerful Advocate for the Literary Arts

These will guide our work through 2028 and beyond. What follows is a fuller narrative around each, along with the measures of success we'll be tracking. We'll report back annually, and in the meantime, please reach out if you have any thoughts or suggestions.

Thank you for your support, and for your steadfast belief in our mission. This community is something rare and beautiful. I feel so very fortunate to be a part of it.



Michael Henry
Executive Director
Cofounder

MISSION

As an independent literary arts center, Lighthouse supports and encourages people to create inspiring art through writing, to find meaning and community, and to achieve their potential as artists and human beings.



VISION

Lighthouse Writers is a leading, vibrant cornerstone of the literary arts, carrying forward the power of story and fostering a sense of belonging in an ever-changing world.





VALUES

At Lighthouse, we believe in every person's innate creativity. We believe that every person has a story to tell, and a right to tell it.

We believe that the literary arts are an essential foundation of humanity, because we know that writing—from the three-minute freewrite to the published book—is an essential way to share the human condition, and enables individuals to get in touch with their deeper selves.

We believe that writing connects people on a deep level, combating loneliness, fostering empathy, and finding meaning in an increasingly complicated world. We provide the space, community, and support where writers and readers can flourish.

THE FOUR PILLARS

1

**Organizational Stability
and Growth**

2

**Programmatic
Excellence**

3

**Community Strength
and Resilience**

4

**Building
Reputation
and Reach**



1. ORGANIZATIONAL STABILITY AND GROWTH

Lighthouse has the resources and expertise to implement its mission, sustain and nurture growth, and continue to innovate in response to its communities' needs on a long-term basis.

FINANCIAL

- Balance revenue and expense growth
- Build cash reserves to weather macro-environmental challenges
- Continually practice accountability and transparency

DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING

Ensure a robust development plan and adequate staffing to increase levels of support. Conduct research to set realistic, ambitious expectations for diversification and growth in the following areas:

- Government
- Foundation and Corporate
- Individual
- Membership
- Events



1. ORGANIZATIONAL STABILITY AND GROWTH

TECHNOLOGY

Build a comprehensive and efficient tech stack to support growth, innovation, and sustainability. Leverage technology to ensure streamlining and reduce manual effort.

- CRM: one for the entire organization
- Website: rewrite website to be more stable and user-friendly, and reduce manual work
- AI Usage/Integration: determine an AI use policy

FACILITY

Maximize the use and activation of the York Street building with Lighthouse programming and community. Make capital investments for maintenance and growth.

- Develop a capital maintenance plan that reflects increased maintenance expenses due to building aging.
- Develop a regular reporting schedule for building usage and value creation.



2. PROGRAMMATIC EXCELLENCE

Our programs will remain consistently relevant and responsive to the times in which we live, growing in support of our mission.

- Excellence in programming, innovation:
 - Regularly evaluate programming and community's experiences of connection to Lighthouse—participants, members, donors, etc.).
 - Consider new opportunities annually.
- Programs are continually integrated to ensure projects embrace diversity, and are consciously inclusive, accessible, and engaging.
- Focus on wellness as a key area of innovation.



3. COMMUNITY STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

We engage with and nurture all members of our staff, faculty, and board to ensure positive and productive relationships and accountability. We foster an ongoing culture of trust, productivity, purposeful work, and joy. We maximize use of the building.

STAFF

Focus on appropriate and supportive metrics to ensure sustained staff involvement, including compensation, benefits, incentive programs, training, and professional development.

- Survey staff to gauge how they're feeling about Lighthouse.
- Conduct regular check-ins to hear their ideas and concerns.
- Create procedures for staff to voice concerns or address issues they're experiencing.
- Create avenues for building camaraderie and community between faculty and staff.

FACULTY

Focus on appropriate and supportive metrics to ensure sustained faculty involvement and belonging, including compensation, incentive programs, and training. Improve overall faculty culture:

- Survey faculty to gauge how they're feeling about Lighthouse.
- Conduct regular check-ins with core faculty to hear their ideas and concerns.
- Create procedures for faculty to voice concerns or address issues they're experiencing.
- Create avenues for building camaraderie and community amongst faculty.

3. COMMUNITY STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

BOARD

Educate and engage board members so that they can best serve Lighthouse and feel fulfilled in their service. Board requirements: Meaningful financial contribution.

- Engagement in programs.
- Attendance at board meetings.
- Provide oversight and strategic vision.
- Serve as ambassadors to their communities.

CULTURE

Culture of engagement, vitality, and flow: Fostering this culture gives everyone the resilience to persist in our mission.

- Consistently nurture a growth mindset.
- Respond to change and outside influences with creativity and openness.
- Build space and time for creativity in Board and staff meetings.

WE WILL ALSO

- Balance staff growth with program and operational needs.
- Regularly invest time and resources in events and other approaches to build connections among these groups.

4. BUILDING REPUTATION AND REACH

All target audiences have a robust and growing awareness of Lighthouse and its mission, optimizing growth. Increase the influence, presence, and visibility of the organization.

Marketing is based on a deep evaluation of customer experience conducted by the program and development teams in the following areas:

- Website
- Advertising
- Social media
- Consistently review market trends, internal and sector-wide.
- Partnering: Build relationships that bring literary arts to unlikely places

Denver cultural space: Consider reviving Story Fest concept in association with program goals and capacity.

Build and expand connections in the international literary community; expand staff connections beyond founders.

Plan and host a literary summit for Colorado organizations, bookstores, and other groups.





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