

**Buffalo Society of Artists  
Strategic Plan for 2019-2022  
Summary**

# Executive Summary

In tandem with making the public aware of the presence and programs of the Buffalo Society of Artists, respondents to the Concept Mapping rating exercises that undergirded this Strategic Planning process felt strongly about the importance of “maintaining and enhancing BSA’s professionalism and identity.” That professionalism and identity is not only to be manifested in the artwork created by BSA members, but also, as a fledgling 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, in the very way BSA does business and interacts with other arts organizations, grantors and potential individual and corporate donors.

To this end, this Strategic Plan can provide a road map for BSA in beginning to build a more effective infrastructure, resilient sustainability and a more professional identity at a time when both the BSA and the cultural milieu in which it operates are facing challenges wrought by social and technological changes. The operational goals and strategies identified in the plan cast a vision of a restructured Board in order to enhance governance effectiveness, the development of a multifaceted annual fundraising plan to help underwrite organizational initiatives and movement toward retaining a part-time staff person who would provide administrative support and a new, ongoing level of consistency for the organization. In addition, proactive initiatives for increasing volunteerism and member participation as well as for creating a greater online BSA presence, particularly on social media, are addressed in the Membership and Communications goals, strategies and action plans. At the same time the plan seeks to identify and maintain goals and strategies associated with the traditional programming priorities of the BSA, that is its exhibitions, educational initiatives and special projects, particularly the Video Archive Program and the BSA history book.

In the Concept Mapping process, the respondents clearly identified ideas associated with Public Relations, Operational Issues and Funding as the most important and achievable. This plan reflects those priorities. In addition, input garnered from the presentation on Board Governance for a Not-for Profit conducted by Karen Lee Spaulding from the John R. Oishei Foundation, along with conversations between Board members and two professional grant writing professionals have also aided in refining the focus of this plan concerning building capacity in BSA’s organizational infrastructure and funding.

In using this document, please note that the plan is generally laid out across five rubrics reflecting the BSA’s committee and budget structure. These rubrics are: Administration (which includes Fiscal, Nominations and Events), Education (which includes the Video Archive Program and Special Projects i.e. the BSA history book), Exhibitions, Membership and Communications (including the Website and Newsletter). The plan first provides a brief outline of the goals and strategies under each heading, and then a more detailed action plan (Appendix A) for each of these areas.

The plan also gives an overview and some general results from the Concept Mapping process along with information from the Oishei Board Governance presentation for review. The three-year plan also provides prospective budgets based on the goals and strategies and action plans laid out in the document for each of the fiscal years covered under the plan. A bullet pointed plan for communicating this plan to the BSA Board, Trustees, membership and other stakeholders and an overview of BSA’s Brand strategy and standards round out the document.

In crafting this Strategic Plan we have sought to build upon our legacy since 1891 in a way that will develop capacity and sustainability in the Buffalo Society of Artists so that its members may continue embrace visual exploration as critical to voice of our time and so that the BSA can continue to promote and expand the awareness of the Western New York artists who do so.

## Table Of Contents

Organizational Description	p. 4
Mission, Vision and Values	p. 5
Goals and Strategies	pp. 6 – 12
Appendix A: Action Plans	pp.13–17
Appendix B: Description of Strategic Planning Process	pp. 38-51
Appendix C: BSA S.W.O.T. Analysis	p. 52
Appendix D: Operating Budget	p. 53
Appendix: E Communicating the Plan	p. 54
Appendix F: Brand Strategy	pp. 55-63

## Organizational Description

The Buffalo Society of Artists is one of the oldest continually operating arts organizations in the country. Started in 1891 to promote and expand the awareness of Western New York artists, the organization largely maintains the same mission today. In 1894 BSA formed a not-for-profit corporation in the State of New York “for the cultivation and advancement of Art.” In October 2016 the BSA received 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt charitable organization.

The Society is a membership organization. Its members are and always been for the most part local artists. The membership of the BSA is currently over 240 members. In a metropolitan area of a little over a million people, this is a significant size for a single organization. Membership is not limited in size. There is an application process for the “exhibiting member” status, which is currently the voting membership of the Society. But as shown by the size of the membership, the application process is not exclusionary. In other words, like with many charitable societies, membership is widely open and available to the relevant community: the community of artists.

In the long history of the BSA, many of the most well known artists in the area have been members. The first exhibit was held on November 14, 1891 in the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy galleries, located in the old Buffalo and Erie County Public Library in Lafayette Square, with nearly 200 works by 50 exhibitors. Thereafter, for well over 100 years, the Buffalo Society of Artists have staged one, two or more local annual exhibits with prizes given for artistic excellence. Early exhibits included the works of members and well-known non-members, such as Theodore Robinson, John Twachtman, William Merritt Chase, Aubrey Beardsley and even French impressionists Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro. Society member Charles Burchfield exhibited regularly with the group. When the Albright Art Gallery was being built in 1905, the Buffalo Society of Artists declined the Gallery’s invitation to merge with it, which would have meant losing its name and identity.

Between 1900 and 1930, the Buffalo Society of Artists exhibitions were successful culturally and financially and were some of the most important events on the social calendar. With the onset of the Depression, the Society focused more on the plight of unemployed artists, although it still held celebratory fancy dress balls, and continued its regular monthly studio visits. In the 30’s, internal disputes began to arise between adherents of “academic” art and “modern” art. Adherents of the “modern” school broke off to form the Patteran Society, now dissolved, and the Buffalo Society of Artists was deemed by many to be primarily proponents of “academic” art. From 1905 to 1977, exhibits had been held periodically at the Albright Art Gallery, and in 1977, the Gallery ended the 75-year relationship, choosing to no longer sponsor any local artist group. Beginning in the 1970’s, both the “academic” and “modern” branches of art came to be more fully represented in the Buffalo Society of Artists, with most members supporters of their own as well as other styles.

As noted above, the Society had for many years conducted public exhibitions for the purpose of promoting public appreciation of its members’ art. In recent years the organization has changed its exhibition activity to expand the public educational attributes of the exhibits. The exhibitions are primarily held in public not-for-profit museums and galleries and are accompanied by substantial educational activity. A high quality printed catalogue is also distributed annually and archived locally for historical purposes at the Burchfield Penney Art Center. Additionally, the Society produces a video archive of interviews with prominent local artists. The BSA has increasingly offered educational seminars and programs to both inform and share their artistic expertise with the public and assist in the professional development of local artists. These activities have grown directly from the Society’s original founding purpose of promoting art in the local community.

## Mission, Vision and Values

**Mission Statement:** Building on a legacy since 1891, we embrace visual exploration as critical to the voice of our time.

**Vision Statement:** The BSA will be widely known as a vibrant network of diverse and accomplished artists challenging and supporting one another, offering programs that assist artists in achieving their professional and personal goals.

**Values:** Eclectic artistic expression as a critical contribution to personal and societal growth; life-long learning and technical advancement; ideally non-biased, juried support for progressive public displays of artistically interpretive points of view.

# Goals and Strategies

## Administration (100)

### ***Goal 1. To employ best practice in exercising Board oversight and governance.***

**Strategy (a):** To restructure current BSA Board structure to include non-artists.

**Strategy (b):** To recruit Board members with specific skills, expertise and diversity required for providing a professional level of oversight and governance.

**Strategy (c):** To assure that all members of the Board are aware of the BSA mission and of their own responsibility to fulfilling that mission as Board members and as Committee Chairs.

**Strategy (d):** To schedule and conduct an Annual Board Retreat and Training session.

### ***Goal 2. To ensure that the mission and work of the BSA is carried out in a consistent and professional manner.***

**Strategy (a):** To compile and disseminate a BSA Manual outlining the responsibilities, tasks, timelines and resources of each BSA Committee.

**Strategy (b):** To recruit and hire a part-time Executive Coordinator to assist the BSA Board in facilitating and completing the work of the organization.

**Strategy (c):** To recruit, orient and support volunteers to adequately man committees and assist in the work of the BSA.

## Administration: Fiscal (110)

### ***Goal 1. To enhance and increase the BSA's economic capital.***

**Strategy (a):** To revise the Constitution and By-laws to establish a standing committee of the Board for Development that will oversee fundraising activities.

**Strategy (b):** To identify funds to support the BSA's infrastructure and programmatic initiatives

**Strategy (c):** To develop an annual fundraising plan that includes a range of methods and revenue sources.

***Goal 2. To oversee BSA economic resources in a manner that ensures that revenue is received and disbursed so as to meet the organization's mission.***

**Strategy (a):** To receive and disburse BSA funds as necessary.

**Strategy (b):** To maintain income and expense records on Quickbooks.

**Strategy (c):** To monitor and reconcile bank and Pay Pal accounts.

**Strategy (d):** To regularly inform the Board and membership of the organization's financial condition.

**Strategy (e):** To conduct an annual budgeting process.

## **Administration: Nominating (120)**

***Goal 1. To recruit competent and committed leadership to guide, govern and develop the Buffalo Society of Artists as it meets its mission.***

**Strategy (a):** To review membership roster, interests on membership application and recommendations from other members to identify potential Board Members.

***Goal 2. To prepare and orient potential Board Members and Trustees as to the roles and responsibilities of the office(s).***

**Strategy (a):** To meet with interested members to explain the roles and responsibilities and answer questions about the office(s).

## **Administration: Events (130)**

***Goal 1. To gather the larger BSA membership together regularly for information sharing and social interaction.***

**Strategy (a):** To convene a Spring Members Meeting.

**Strategy (b):** To sponsor an Annual Picnic/Meeting

**Strategy (c):** To sponsor an Annual Meeting and Members Dinner

## **Education (200)**

***Goal 1. To provide a variety of opportunities for BSA members and other artists to network, learn from one another and to develop professionally.***

**Strategy (a):** To schedule a series of four (4) member artist studio visits each year where member artists can show and discuss their work and process.

**Strategy (b):** To schedule a series of four (4) Coffeehouse Conversations each year where artists and guests can discuss relevant topics in art making and culture.

**Strategy (c):** To sponsor two (2) art critiques to provide member artists an opportunity to receive instructive feedback from colleagues.

**Strategy (d):** To schedule a series of four (4) “ArtFlix” film screenings each year to prompt networking and discussion of issues in contemporary art practice.

**Strategy (e):** To sponsor one (1) to presentation each year focused on topics that will assist artists achieve their artistic and professional goals.

***Goal 2. To assist members in accessing resources that will help develop their professional practice and presence.***

**Strategy (a):** Educate members on how to access available artists resources including websites, national and international artist’s groups, competitions and calls for work, artist grant and residency programs, galleries, etc.

***Goal 3. To provide opportunities for members to share their artistic experience and expertise with the community.***

**Strategy (a):** To sponsor a “Garden Walk Paint Out” in one (1) to two (2) community gardens during Garden Walk Buffalo.

**Strategy (b):** To support the mentoring of student artists from a local high school.

## **Education: Video Archive Program (210)**

***Goal 1. To document a visual and aural record of prominent Western New York visual artists for historical and educational purposes.***

**Strategy (a):** To create six (6) individual films of prominent Western New York visual artists and their artwork wherein each artist discusses and explains her or his artistic practices and careers.

***Goal 2. To make VAP film records available to local and wider communities and to future generations***

**Strategy (a):** To upload films to the BSA and the Burchfield Penney Art Center's websites.

**Strategy (b):** To upload films to YouTube, Instagram and other social media

**Strategy (c):** To utilize VAP films in community presentations.

## **Education: Special Projects (210)**

***Goal 1. To create and publish a hardcover, full color, scholarly book chronicling the history of the Buffalo Society of Artists from its inception in 1891 to the present day.***

**Strategy (a):** To develop illustrated historical narrative

***Goal 2. To ensure the book is available to BSA members and the public at a reasonable price, and at zero net cost to the BSA.***

**Strategy (a):** To mount a crowd-funding campaign to underwrite production of the book.

**Strategy (b):** To market, sell, and deliver books for an affordable price.

## **Exhibitions (300)**

***Goal 1. To provide BSA membership a variety of exhibition opportunities each year.***

**Strategy (a):** To sponsor two (2) juried exhibitions each year, one being the annual catalogue exhibition.

**Strategy (b):** To sponsor an annual non-juried members exhibition.

**Strategy (c):** To sponsor one (1) or two (2) additional exhibition opportunities each year such as: online, pop-up, and thematic exhibitions or exhibitions addressing social issues.

**Strategy (d):** To assist membership in accessing local, national and international exhibitions.

***Goal 2. To ensure that exhibitions for the next four years are planned including those for the 2021 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year.***

**Strategy (a):** To develop a schedule of exhibitions, venues and jurors that covers the next four years.

**Strategy (b):** To develop a special schedule of specific exhibitions celebrating the 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the BSA in 2121.

## **Exhibitions: Juried Exhibition-Alt. (310)**

***Goal 1. To enrich and educate the community by providing a juried exhibition of high artistic expression.***

***Goal 2. To meet the core tenant of the BSA Exhibiting Members Benefits.***

**Strategy (a):** To sponsor a juried Spring Art Exhibition each year at various planned venues.

## **Exhibitions: Open Members Exhibition (320)**

***Goal 1. To enrich and educate the community by providing a juried exhibition of high artistic expression.***

***Goal 2. To meet the core tenant of the BSA Exhibiting Members Benefits.***

***Goal 3. To encourage Exhibiting Members recruit artists to become Associate members.***

**Strategy (a):** To sponsor a non-juried exhibition for BSA Exhibiting and Associate members.

## **Exhibitions: Juried Catalogue Exhibition (330)**

***Goal 1. To enrich and educate the community by providing a juried exhibition of high artistic expression.***

***Goal 2. To meet the core tenant of the BSA Exhibiting Members Benefits.***

**Strategy (a):** To sponsor a juried art exhibition with a published catalogue each year for Exhibiting Members.

## **Membership (400)**

***Goal 1. To proactively recruit skilled and reputable artists from all demographic groups with special focus on those not currently represented within the BSA membership.***

**Strategy (a):** To review current membership benefits, jurying and outreach policies with regard to recruitment of artists from diverse backgrounds.

**Strategy (b):** To develop a list of BSA Membership benefits that are salient to artists at various career levels.

**Strategy (c):** To develop a professional and respected jurying process for potential exhibiting members.

**Strategy (d):** To develop outreach and public relations strategies that are targeted to artists from diverse communities.

***Goal 2. To increase volunteerism on the part of BSA members for the Board, Committees, BSA programs and events.***

**Strategy (a):** To clearly present a variety of volunteer opportunities and responsibilities.

**Strategy (a):** To provide recognition and support for all volunteers.

***Goal 3. To provide opportunities for BSA members to get to know and network with new members and with one another.***

**Strategy (a):** To sponsor a new members meeting once a year.

## **Communications (500)**

***Goal 1. To promote public awareness of the BSA as a professional and relevant arts organization.***

**Strategy (a):** To utilize purchased and free advertising opportunities at least 12 times per year.

**Strategy (b):** To increase BSA's presence on social media.

**Strategy (c):** To engage BSA members in active promotion of the organization.

***Goal 2. To increase BSA's visibility with the local public, as well as the national and international art world.***

**Strategy (a):** To develop a "Rack Card" which both spot lights members' work and provides a schedule of BSA activities for the year.

**Strategy (b):** To develop a display with BSA recruitment materials and merchandise to present at local art festivals and other events.

**Strategy (c):** Upload video posts of BSA events to social media.

**Strategy (d):** Take out ads in national and international art publications.

## **Communications: Website (510)**

***Goal 1. To maintain increased clarity, ease of use, and opportunities on the website for BSA members and other users.***

**Strategy (a):** To continue to upgrade and enhance website features as determined by needs of BSA members.

**Strategy (b):** To encourage and facilitate BSA members' increased usage of website.

## **Communications: Newsletter (520)**

***Goal 1. To continue developing Newsletter and Update as communication tools for BSA members and interested others.***

**Strategy (a):** To feature informative articles, current BSA and member news utilizing best practices.

**Strategy (b):** To increase the number of personal stories.