

# The Seeing Eye Strategic Plan

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## Overview

This strategic plan sets the direction for The Seeing Eye and will frame the work of the Board, staff, and volunteers in the coming years. The plan was developed together by the staff Leadership Team and Board of Trustees, with input from the entire staff and some key alumni stakeholders. **The plan's central goal is to enable The Seeing Eye to adapt in a changing environment to stay on the cutting edge and leadership in guide dog schools.** Staff leadership will implement the plan each year as it develops its annual workplans and budgets, prioritizing for implementation key strategic initiatives outlined in this plan.

## Building on our Past and Rising to the Challenges of the Future

The Seeing Eye of Morristown, New Jersey, is the oldest guide dog school in the world. Since 1929, The Seeing Eye has been selecting, breeding, and training dogs for lives of service, and carefully matching the dogs with individuals who are blind and visually impaired, teaching them to work together as a mutually supportive team. Since its founding, The Seeing Eye has matched more than 17,600 specially bred and trained Seeing Eye® dogs with blind and visually impaired men and women from across the United States and Canada, and currently has nearly 1,700 active graduates coming from all walks of life. Our graduates have learned how to handle, work with, and care for their dogs at home, on the job, on public transportation, and in all public accommodations.

For nearly a century The Seeing Eye has been distinguished by the clarity of its purpose, excellence of its program, strength of its finances, and stability of its leadership. We built our reputation by setting and promoting best practices that have been emulated by several other guide dog schools and incorporated into international accreditation standards. Our breeding and canine veterinary programs have improved dog health outcomes and the data generated has fostered numerous research collaborations and catalyzed the application of the findings. Building on these strengths, we envision a future in which we leverage this accumulated knowledge and progress while adapting in a changing environment to stay on the cutting edge and leadership in guide dog schools.

The planning process validated the organization's commitment to continuing to evolve, while also staying true to our core mission, our organizational vision, and a culture infused with our core values:

### **Our Mission:**

To enhance the independence, dignity, and self-confidence of people who are blind and visually impaired through the use of Seeing Eye® dogs.

## **Our Vision:**

To be recognized for sustained excellence and continuous improvement as the best guide dog school to attend and to support, as a donor, volunteer, puppy raiser, or employee.

## **Our Values:**

- **Mission Passion**  
Our passion for the mission of The Seeing Eye gives each day purpose.
- **Stewardship**  
We keep the trust of our constituents and protect their interests through responsible individual action and caring use of the organization's resources.
- **Teamwork and Collaboration**  
We hold ourselves accountable for adding value as individuals, being supportive of our colleagues in their work, and working together to foster team success.
- **Respect for Others**  
We treat others with the respect and dignity that we desire for ourselves. We do not discriminate. We maintain an inclusive workplace and program, embracing the ideals of equal treatment for all, without regard to race, religion, gender identity, socio-economic standing, disability status, or any other characteristic or group affiliation.
- **Integrity**  
We are guided by principles of honesty, integrity, and high ethical conduct in all we do. We will always do what we believe is right.
- **Pursuit of Excellence**  
We are committed to excellence now and in the future through a shared commitment to quality, timely responsiveness, and to ongoing improvement in every phase of our operations.

## **The Planning Process**

The Seeing Eye applied scenario planning as the basis for this plan. Scenarios are stories about the future. Scenario thinking encourages an organization to challenge deeply held assumptions and to chart a clear path forward through difficult and uncertain times. Scenario thinking allows an organization to engage around what it does not know and/or cannot control, as well as external forces that define the environment in which it must operate. These unknown forces that shape an entity's external environment are "critical uncertainties" and form the foundation on which scenarios are created.

In scenario thinking, rather than choosing one scenario and planning toward it, an organization plans around a set of scenarios that elevate the most critical uncertainties it needs to address.

The future will never be exactly as described in any one scenario but will be made up of components of all the scenarios that are created. The strategies that work across this wide range of future possibilities are robust strategies that create a powerful and adaptive platform for the organization's strategic planning.

Information was gathered to help clarify The Seeing Eye's distinctiveness, the areas in which we could have measurable impact, and the most relevant drivers of change shaping the future market environment. The planning process included a SWOT analysis, one-on-one interviews, surveys, and interactive workshop sessions.

The core strategic questions associated with maximizing the organization's potential toward our mission were used to determine the set of scenarios. As a result of an interactive set of workshops and interim collaborative and individual work, The Seeing Eye 2035 Scenarios were developed and then explored strategically.

In the process, we identified the following underlying core strategic questions:

***How do we maximize our potential toward our mission?***

- *How does our mission and/or methods need to evolve with the changing times?*
- *How do we maintain our leadership and potentially increase our impact?*
- *What are our priorities to ensure the organization's financial wellbeing in perpetuity?*

In order to continue to maximize our potential toward our mission, The Seeing Eye must be positioned to evolve within our core mission - not change our mission. That evolution will include proactively stepping into the research and development space and leveraging our existing assets as a means of diversifying our revenue stream. In that way we celebrate and build on our history of excellence as we turn to the future. In answering these questions, we identified five robust strategies:

**The Five Robust Strategies**

**1. TECHNOLOGY**

- *Further leverage assistive technological advancements that help the students and the organization to enhance the guide dog partnership*
- *Invest in organizational IT infrastructure and business process improvements and enhance data collection, accessibility, and analysis for strategic decision-making*

**2. STUDENTS**

- *Enhance our human-centric, high touch service to retain and attract a robust applicant pool of qualified and motivated students*

**3. STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

- *Attract, retain, and develop the best talent to sustain the promise of our brand and position as a leading guide dog school*

**4. FINANCES**

- *Ensure adequate financial resources to sustain the delivery of our mission over the long-term*

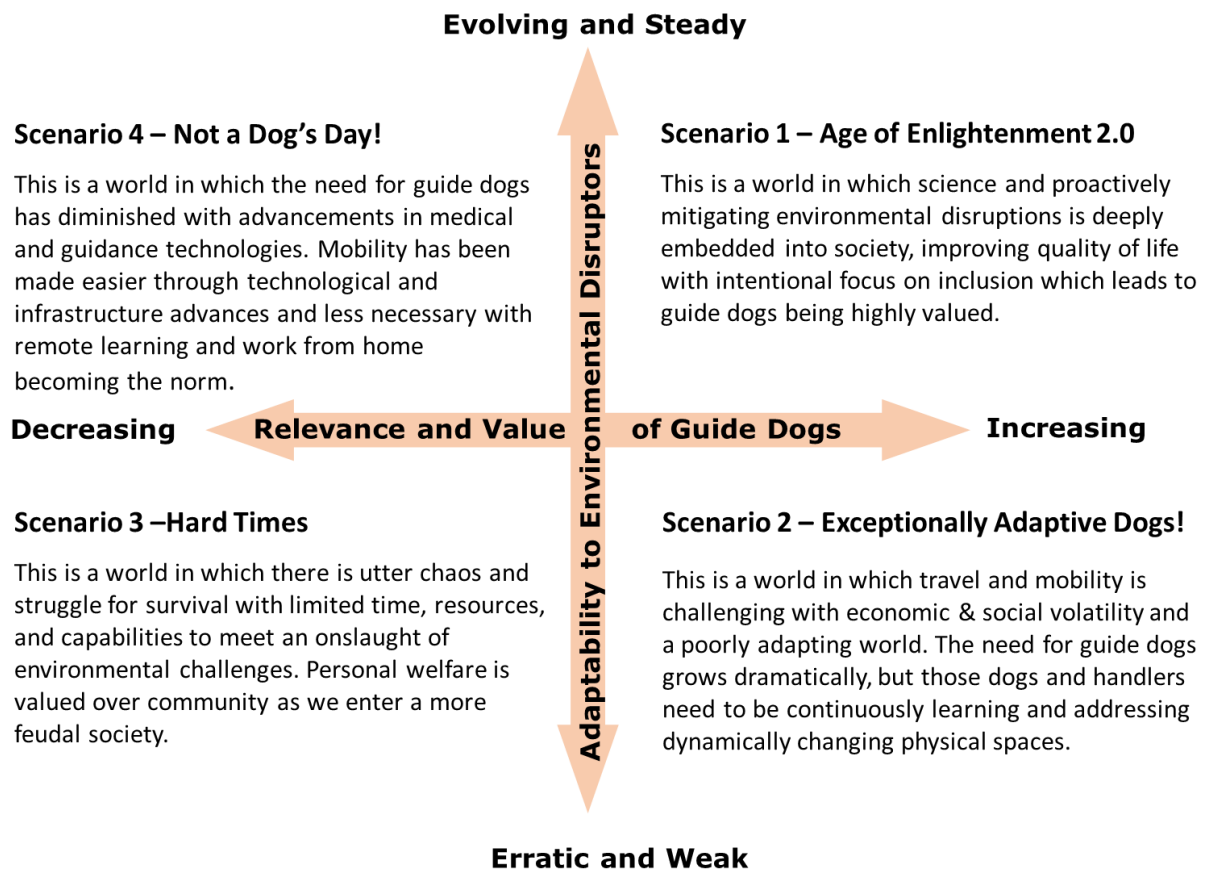
**5. BRAND**

- *Fully embrace, enhance, and differentiate our image, brand, and position*

Each of these strategies is detailed further in this plan, determined to be a “core”, a “supporting” or “foundational” and together create a path for long-term success in challenging and uncertain times.

### The 2035 Scenarios

Scenario creation is simply a tool for exploring possible futures. It uses early indicators seen in the present that may be borne out. No one scenario is exactly how the world will evolve, but the different possible futures reveal an amalgam of possible outcomes across which robust strategies common to all are seen to emerge.



This set of scenarios is framed by two critical future uncertainties:

**Relevance and Value of Guide Dogs:** Will the relevance and value of guide dogs be increasing or decreasing in the future? How will this affect enrollment at The Seeing Eye?

**Adaptability to Environmental Disruptors:** Will society become increasingly adaptive to environmental disruptors such that its progress is evolving and steady or will its response be erratic and weak?

The scenario set explores a wide range of drivers of change highly relevant to our mission and that could impact the blindness community. We considered some the following current trends that will shape our evolution as an organization:

#### Student Recruitment and Enrollment:

A small percentage of people who are blind or visually impaired choose to travel with the aid of a guide dog. Partnership with a dog requires training and a dog requires sufficient work and ongoing veterinary care. A certain degree of strength, mobility and determination is necessary for a handler to succeed with a guide. Guide dog mobility is simply not for everyone. It has always been necessary to market to the blindness community and to identify and educate potential constituents about the benefit of training with Seeing Eye dog. The nature of this challenge is evolving. Innovative recruitment, communication and advocacy channels will be necessary to reach new applicant populations.

#### Changing Blindness Demographics:

The blind population of the United States is changing. Greater occupational safety and medical advances reducing the number of otherwise healthy young people who become blind through injury or disease. There are fewer causes of neonatal blindness and more medical advances to mitigate congenital forms of blindness. The generally more sedentary lifestyle of adults reduces the independent mobility requirements of blind people. Advances in technology have increased telecommuting and therefore lessened the need for mobility. Blindness on the whole is becoming more an accompanying aspect of other illnesses or an age-related degenerative impairment of vision. Many of the people in these categories would not benefit from guide dog mobility. Medical advances such as corneal implants and gene-editing experiments to restore vision could have far-reaching implications. In addition, many states have reduced their services to blind and visually impaired individuals to the point that it hard for them to acquire adequate mobility and rehabilitation training.

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#### Advancing Technology:

Advances in vehicle and transportation technology hold both promise and peril for blind individuals. Silent and autonomous (self-driving) vehicles could impact the safety and navigation experience of the blindness community. On the other hand, smart cars may be able to sense and avoid pedestrians better. There is growing impact of assistive navigation technologies using remote sensing, global positioning, precise 3D imaging, artificial intelligence/machine learning. The fusion of camera and detection and ranging technology in easily accessible apps could aid navigation, object avoidance, and independent travel. Audible Pedestrian Signals (APS) at crosswalks can make streets safer. Conversely, if not used in a complementary fashion to guide dog handling (which requires situational awareness of one's surrounding environment and competent independent travel), such tech aids could be incompatible with safe guide dog use and many new and exciting assistive technologies have proven to be too expensive for the average visually impaired traveler to afford.

#### Work and Lifestyle Changes Resulting from the Pandemic:

A clear impact of COVID-19 is that work at home will be a trend for the longer term. This could reduce the demand for active daily guide dog use.

Societal Disability Awareness and Support:

Societal support for and understanding of disabilities should be on the increase, but much more education and training is needed in the general public, places of business, and in law enforcement as to the access rights of guide dog handlers.

Trends in Philanthropy:

With thousands of worthy charities and causes worldwide, there is an increasingly competitive philanthropic market, and many factors that will drive donor behavior and decisions about which charity to support. Human services charities are currently trending downward in percentage of the charitable dollar received. Social venture capital and “B Corporations” offer some private market alternatives to traditional charitable fundraising models.

The full set of drivers of change explored through the scenarios include:

Economy and Financial Markets	Requirement for/ relevance of Guide Dogs
Public / Funder Perception and Behavior	Environmental Disruptors
Mobility and Access, Sense of Place	Advances in Technology
Infrastructure and Design	Equity and Inclusion
Work/life Balance	Educational Models
Human and Canine Health	Animal Rights and Ethics

We first explored the strategic implications of each of these scenarios individually. From this work, the Board and Leadership Team identified the robust strategies that worked well across the wide range of scenarios. These robust strategies are the basis for this Strategic Plan as they position our organization to be ready to adapt and act proactively in an increasingly dynamic and uncertain environment.

The strategies that were not found to be robust are considered contingent strategies, meaning that the organization would not act upon those strategies until the contingency of those scenario-specific characteristics are playing out in the world. When those times come, these are the strategies that will allow The Seeing Eye to successfully adapt to the change.

The following scenario descriptions include the strategic insights associated with each scenario. The subsequent section will then draw out from this material the robust strategies.

**Scenario 1: Age of Enlightenment 2.0** This is a world in which science and proactively mitigating environmental disruptions are deeply embedded into society, improving quality of life with an intentional focus on inclusion, leading to guide dogs being highly valued and relevant. This scenario affords The Seeing Eye the opportunity to embrace leading edge technology and methodology to enhance and complement guide dog use and the dog/owner partnership. Although this scenario may seem ideal, it is, in fact, a highly competitive scenario, requiring The Seeing Eye to maintain and build on our distinctive service as a guide dog school. That

distinctiveness is centered on The Seeing Eye's personal touch and people centric approach. In this scenario, TSE can best address the demand over time for the number of individuals we can serve with independence and mobility by integrating technological advances into its guide dog/owner partnerships.

**Scenario 2: Exceptionally Adaptive Dogs!** This is a world in which travel and mobility is challenged by economic and social volatility in a poorly adapting world. The need for guide dogs grows dramatically, but those dogs and handlers need to be exceptional, continuously learning and addressing dynamically changing physical spaces. In this fast-changing scenario, it becomes critical for The Seeing Eye to actively monitor critical technological, scientific and environmental changes in the outside world that will impact us related to genetic resources, technology and environmental change. This focused monitoring of the external dynamics of change needs to be linked to a more formalized, structured process for improvement and evolution of the programs that can be accomplished by leveraging our in-house expertise through a mix of applied research, advisory groups, and through partnering with external resources/organizations that perform research focused on relevant areas of change. Staff can act as subject matter experts, leveraging outside expertise in various fields including traffic infrastructure, assistive technology, diversity and inclusion, fundraising, genetics and canine health and behavior. With funding scarcer in this scenario, our organization must stay proactive in raising our relevance and profile to be the recognized leading adaptive guide dog school by philanthropic donors interested in investing in The Seeing Eye's long-term potential and impact. This scenario provides the basis for our organization to be progressive in who and how we serve the blindness community, providing the opportunity for us to meet the evolving requirements of those we serve within the blindness community.

**Scenario 3: Hard Times** This is a world in which there is utter chaos and struggle for survival with limited time, resources, and capabilities to meet an onslaught of environmental challenges. Guide dog schools experience a greatly diminished demand for their services and as a result we must address our current mission becoming increasingly irrelevant. This scenario requires The Seeing Eye to consider longer term how our mission may need to pivot at some point in the future. The Seeing Eye would need to determine our ability to adapt to and mitigate against disruption. The Seeing Eye should continue to strengthen our fundraising and consider additional means of deepening and diversifying our revenue stream while continuing our drive toward continued cost savings. In this way we can then look to potentially deepen our capacity to perform research and development functions. The Seeing Eye must build on our current reputation as the leading people-centered guide dog school to build a new reputation for a broader understanding of the issues facing blind people with solutions that may not have the dog at their core.

**Scenario 4: Not a Dog's Day!** This is a world in which the need for guide dogs has diminished with advancements in medical and guidance technologies. Mobility has been made easier through technological and infrastructure advances and less necessary with remote learning and work from home becoming the norm. To stay abreast of these critical changes to the market, The Seeing Eye would benefit from a blindness community advisory panel made up of a cross section of the blind population to better understand the changing needs of the community. This scenario requires The Seeing Eye not only to be anchored in past practices, but rather be

prepared to change and lead the industry by being on the cutting-edge of change in training and integrative technologies. Guide dogs cannot be viewed as a stand-alone solution, but rather integrated with technology. With the shrinking market of this scenario, in order to gain market share and be the leader, The Seeing Eye would need to consider changing our service delivery model, organizational infrastructure and capacity toward a teaching people who are blind to use the technology, such as advanced orientation and mobility training; and/or toward the breeding of dogs for other purposes. The Seeing Eye would also need to seriously consider ways in which we can diversify our revenue including applying for technology grants, monetizing assets, or creating new profitable models around veterinary medicine, breeding or genetic expertise and leverage the value of its long-term canine database.

## **Focusing the Robust Strategies for the Future of The Seeing Eye:**

**Core Strategies** were identified as those strategies that are the strategic core and relate directly to our Strategic Plan goal: *adapting in a changing environment and staying on the cutting edge and leadership in guide dog schools.*

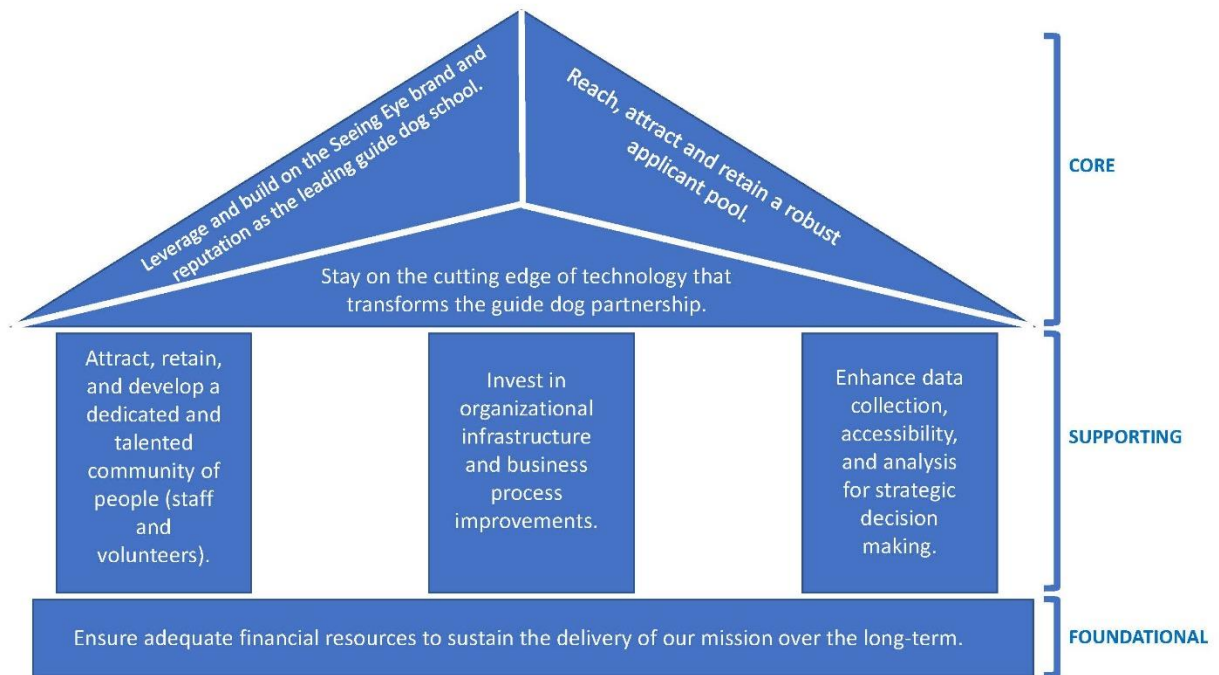
1. **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY:** Stay on the cutting edge of technology that can be used to evolve, complement and transform the guide dog partnership. Within this – review customer/student service model to serve in the right way and at the right level.
2. **STUDENTS:** Reach, attract and retain a robust applicant pool.
3. **BRAND:** Leverage and build on the Seeing Eye brand and reputation as the leading guide dog school worldwide.

**Supporting Strategies** are important hygiene factors for our organization. These strategies support and enable the organization to successfully implement its core strategies.

1. **STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS:** Attract, retain, and develop a dedicated and talented community of people. This should focus on staff and volunteers, as well as graduate recruitment for staff positions.
2. **TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE:** Invest in organizational IT infrastructure and business process improvements.
3. **DATA AND INFORMATION:** Enhance data collection, accessibility, and analysis for strategic decision making -in our programs, to support academic and research partnerships, and for comparative/competitive analysis of our program metrics.

**Foundational Strategy** pertains to our finances. Ensuring adequate resources (growing the endowment, containing costs, expanding revenues) to secure the sustainability of the organization over the long-term is the foundational strategy.





## Roadmap for Realizing the Robust Strategies

### ***1. TECHNOLOGY: Further leverage assistive technological advancements that help the organization to fulfill its mission.***

This strategy is aimed at keeping The Seeing Eye on the leading edge of new developments and allows us to stay competitive while building on our leadership in the guide dog school space. Given the rapid acceleration of technology, it is essential that The Seeing Eye recognize it as a driver of advancement and strategically invest in, optimize, and leverage several aspects of technology to keep pace with how it will be used across the business spectrum - to stay on the leading edge of advancements in breeding, dog training, and student instruction, donor engagement, marketing and administrative functions.

***We will*** commit to boosting our IT capability, leveraging resources, and securing the necessary hardware, software, personnel and training to meet the strategic goals discussed here. This will be a means to achieve our technology goals strategically.

***We will*** develop and communicate an organization-wide technology advancement vision and implement a plan guided by evolving business process needs, and to keep pace with changes in technology.

***We will*** establish a new tech advisory group, and leverage expertise of this group to help staff screen new and emerging assistive technologies to determine whether/how they would complement or enhance the human-guide dog partnership, and not interfere with or supplant it. Graduates who are thought leaders in assistive technology and its complementary

application in guide dog handling will be included. Staff member(s) with appropriate knowledge/expertise to be a liaison and point person(s) will be assigned to work with this advisory group. This strategy will allow us to benefit from deepening staff knowledge and leveraging staff capacity with appropriate outside expertise to shape the evolution of dog/owner partnerships, and more quickly integrate technology into training methods.

**We will** invest in the most effective technology platform for strategically supporting leading edge donor engagement, including new donor acquisition, retention, and constituent relationship management. Use research, analytics, social media, virtual events platforms, and coordinated digital marketing strategies to engage and cultivate friends and supporters, and to provide effective multi-channel giving options to donors.

**We will** update our website platform to be a model of accessibility, and a more robust, modern platform to keep pace with constituent needs/demands and technology.

**We will** use technology in a more targeted way to develop and train instructors and other staff more efficiently.

**We will** explore strategic alliances with technology companies like IBM and others to help leverage intellect and expertise in key areas of technology problem-solving.

**We will** enhance data collection, accessibility, analysis and utilization for use in programs and to support academic and research partnerships (breeding, veterinary, dog behavior); treat data as an asset, a resource, a strength to use strategically and in appropriate cases to monetize with partnerships (e.g. pet food and nutrition companies, universities, nonprofit agencies, government agencies, that are potential consumers of our data).

## ***2. STUDENTS: Build on our reputation for human centric, high touch service to maintain and attract a robust applicant pool.***

The distinct competency of The Seeing Eye is in our high touch, customer centric model deeply embedded within our values on all aspects of the student/graduate experience. We need to build on our reputation of this human-centric model to differentiate ourselves, and to provide exemplary service that is responsive to the needs of applicants and attracts a robust pool of candidates.

Although our program obviously serves and is inclusive to the blindness community, we should continue to focus on broadening the diversity of those we serve, increasing matches through outreach to those of diverse backgrounds who need Seeing Eye guide dogs.

As need and demand dictate based on data and cost analysis, The Seeing Eye could broaden its service delivery, creating a flexible, hybrid model for home training or “home and away” (partially on campus and partially at home). To cover the incremental cost of this alternative

instruction model, The Seeing Eye should reach out to new philanthropic supporters and those who wish to direct their annual giving to this key training program need.

There is a need to secure more data points to better characterize the demand for guide dogs, as well as student preference for attending The Seeing Eye's program. There is currently a dearth of accurate and standardized data (such a study was done in 1960 by the School for Social Research at Columbia University, funded by The Seeing Eye, and with data provided by guide dog schools). Further partnerships are possible and should be explored to improve data points.

**We will** secure better data to accurately predict future student demand for our services and respond to changing demographics of demand for guide dogs among people with blindness. We will participate with other guide dog schools/blindness services agencies on a study to assess demand for guide dogs and use the results of such studies toward Seeing Eye student acceptance parameters.

**We will** bolster our ability to obtain feedback and solicit more input from the communities of students, graduates, and the broader blindness community. Such information obtained through various mechanisms, such as from surveys, forums, teleconferences and other outreach can help us to better understand the past, current, and future experience and needs of our "customers."

**We will** pursue a recruitment that ensures inclusivity and broadens diversity of applicant pool, as well as anticipates/mitigates possible future declines in enrollment. The goal is to ensure an appropriate diversity and inclusion level within our student pool. To assess what percentage of eligible applicants can be served, we need to do research and proactive outreach to people of diverse identities and backgrounds in the blindness community.

**We will** create an adaptive student marketing plan to ensure we can be more proactive about recruitment and obtain sufficient referrals so as to always attract dog-ready students who have the requisite orientation and mobility skills. (Input and referrals from graduates, as well as our work with Orientation & Mobility programs have traditionally been the best sources of applicant recruitment, but our plan is to also be more proactive and data driven.)

**We will** strive to return to a pre-COVID service level as soon as possible, with a goal to serve all students in a timely fashion, balancing our ratios of new and retrain students such that we maintain or grow our constituency. We will monitor demand trends to ensure continued enrollment and, if demand exists among qualified applicants, seek to support an increase in student volumes.

**We will** support our graduates' independence and responsibility to cover their own veterinary care costs, by working on resources and information to enable the graduate to make the case to their veterinarians in negotiating for financial assistance for their Seeing Eye dog.

**3. STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS: Attract, Retain and Develop a dedicated and talented community of people to sustain the value of our brand and position as a leading guide dog school:**

Investing in our people includes maintaining and expanding the high level of staff expertise to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. Staff must be able to adapt where necessary to include new technological advances to ensure that as the delivery model and services change, The Seeing Eye has the right people, skills, and tools to meet current organizational needs. However, we face succession planning challenges in our leadership and senior staff ranks.

The focus on R&D and staying on the leading edge of advances in breeding, genetics, canine health, training and partnering will require the staff to evolve their knowledge and expertise. These new advances will likely place new requirements on training and development of existing staff and recruitment of new staff. In this way, our organization can ensure our staff is resilient and continues to bring experience, expertise and learning to lead The Seeing Eye among guide dog schools. Such efforts also require us to continue to invest in attracting and retaining the best talent. These investments include ensuring the inclusive culture, health and retirement benefits, and work/life balance offered is competitive with other guide dog schools.

**We will** implement a purposeful succession planning program, to intentionally develop the leaders of tomorrow.

**We will** build upon our inclusive and equitable workplace environment to attract and retain exceptional talent with diverse backgrounds. This includes investing in staff and volunteer training, carefully calibrating programs to staff capacity, and supporting appropriate areas of work/life balance to ensure resilience.

**We will** proactively seek to increase recruitment of blind or visually impaired applicants when job opportunities are posted.

**We will** recruit Board members who represent the needed advisory expertise, are committed to the mission, can help advance our culture of philanthropy, and represent a diversity of backgrounds.

**4. FINANCES: Ensure adequate financial resources are available to sustain the delivery of our mission over the long-term.**

In order to fund The Seeing Eye's continued evolution as a leading guide dog school in the world, we must maintain the sustainability of the endowment, increase our revenues and control our expenses.

**We will** manage the endowment sustainably to achieve at least a 6% annual return from investments and draw no more than 4% annually on average, so that the endowment grows by at least 2% per year.

**We will** strive to make our legacy and annual fundraising more opportunity-driven based on economic conditions and market opportunities (i.e. potential changes in capital gains, estate, and regular income taxes levels may create opportunities that we need to seize for working with and educating donors on charitable tax-advantaged outcomes of giving to TSE).

**We will** strive to increase revenues and continue to vigilantly manage expense growth to control costs such that the endowment draw decreases to 4% through a phased approach. Thereafter the increase in the annual draw shall be not more than 2% annually.

**We will** incorporate strategic investments contemplated in this plan into the annual budget. The implementation of this plan will be done through the prioritization of projects and budgeted in the annual workplans. There will be identifiers in the budget of commitments to the incremental cost of specific strategic initiatives, including information concerning those that have a return on investment.

**We will** consider establishing a Capital Reserve Fund to help support needed major capital projects.

**We will** consider ways to utilize excess capacity of our physical assets (infrastructure and dogs) and our unique expertise and database in genetics, breeding, canine medicine and training to create new profitable revenue generating opportunities. Such an approach should be carefully developed to be mission-aligned and to maintain the safety and wellbeing of our core programs.

**We will** reduce canine medical costs by negotiating favorable discounts and/or donations from veterinary hospitals in return for veterinary recognition awards and favorable publicity from The Seeing Eye. Encouraging/incentivizing Puppy Raisers to use the designated veterinary hospitals for routine (and when possible emergency vet care) will help The Seeing Eye control expenses.

**We will** explore models for providing routine veterinary services for our own dogs in Puppy Development. This would be directed at increasing the quality and consistency of care and reducing puppy health care costs.

**We will** strive to launch a recurring challenge match for a Canine Medical Fund as a pathway to attract more annual donor giving to help support canine medical costs.

**We will** strive to increase our charitable revenue stream, by continuing to build a culture of philanthropy among all constituents. Through coordinated efforts of staff and Board, we will enhance the cultivation and stewardship of donors to inspire donor loyalty and expand annual and legacy giving. The Board must leverage its social and business connections, and serve as ambassadors to open doors to major gift supporters, foundations, and corporate strategic partners, and cultivate corporate “champions” for PR. We will recruit supporters who contribute to The Seeing Eye and/or include TSE in their estate plans (grads, puppy raisers, volunteers, etc.) to serve as fundraising ambassadors and encourage opportunities for them to

provide testimonials to their peers encouraging others within the Seeing Eye family to give annually or pledge legacy support.

### ***5. BRAND: Fully Embrace, Enhance, and Differentiate our Image, Brand, and Position***

The Seeing Eye is the pioneer guide dog school in North America, established more than 90 years ago and widely recognized throughout the world. Future branding must leverage the brand and differentiate The Seeing Eye from its competitors. The Seeing Eye must continually position the organization as an expert and leader in breeding, raising, and training dogs (animal husbandry), and accessibility, advocacy and guide dog mobility. Likewise, we must protect The Seeing Eye brand from threats such as trademark infringement and risk to the Seeing Eye's reputation from misrepresentation/mischaracterization of our program or methods.

***We will*** position The Seeing Eye's messaging and communication strategies to a broader audience by creating a strategic marketing and fundraising plan for the U.S. and Canada that would increase recruitment of students, fundraising, and awareness of the potential for Seeing Eye® dog partnerships.

***We will*** expand access and advocacy campaigns to educate public about guide dog use and the access rights of handlers.

***We will*** closely monitor changing standards, practices and ethics in the guide dog industry so as to ensure our high-quality training methodology and animal welfare standards are consistent with and reflect the needs of our handlers, and reinforce our brand, image, and position. As our breeding and training has evolved over 90+ years, assess how to evolve our positive reinforcement and discipline standards consistent with ways in which the dogs we breed are of high quality and require less management than the dogs of the past. Seek comparative data from across the guide dog industry on training outcomes using different methods.

### **Summary -- The Path Forward**

The Seeing Eye will reach its centennial milestone in 2029. If implemented in a coordinated fashion over the next few years, many of the initiatives in this Strategic Plan will create a thriving, modern, nimble, and adaptive organization that adeptly navigates the pace of change and disruptors in the world and turns them into opportunities. To successfully implement this plan, The Seeing Eye must meet the change challenges facing the organization to further build organizational excellence and distinctive leading capability in the following ways:

- investment in our people (both staff and volunteers);
- embrace new technology and research initiatives and sustain and optimize facilities;
- find creative new ways to diversify our funding streams;
- engage in new partnerships;
- expand our philanthropic activities and brand awareness;
- maintain continuous improvement;

- maintain and evolve our exceptional breeding program and distinctive training methodology;
- continue our focus on cost reduction and streamlining existing operational activities.