



CENTER for
LAND-BASED
LEARNING

Strategic Plan
2023 - 2025



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
OUR PURPOSE	3
THEORY OF CHANGE	4
THREE-YEAR GOALS.....	5
1. Become a statewide innovation hub.	5
2. Empower our alumni to thrive.....	7
3. Establish CLBL as a recognized educational provider in workforce development for California’s agricultural industry.....	8
4. Equip our team members to grow and lead.	9
5. Ensure our financial sustainability.	11



INTRODUCTION

Overview

For twenty-one years, the Center for Land-Based Learning (CLBL) has inspired, motivated, and taught people of all ages to be leaders in their communities, become farmers and natural resource stewards, and appreciate and care for California's agricultural and working landscapes. In recent years, the organization has expanded its reach and impact, both locally and across the state. After a successful capital campaign, CLBL opened its new headquarters at the Maples Farm in Woodland in May, 2020, featuring a 30-acre campus with new offices, a classroom, and dramatically increased acres of farmland and infrastructure to support beginning farmers. With the support of deepened partnerships, its signature programs have continued to grow, now reaching participants across 30 counties. Further, CLBL launched its Mobile Farmer's Market in 2021 to increase access to fresh fruit and produce for West Sacramento's low income and immigrant families and has recently embarked on a new Farm and Climate Program at the Maples Farm.

In a rapidly changing environment and with a growing team, CLBL has been adaptive and responsive while continuing to deliver high quality programs around the state. This strategic plan represents an intentional pause to identify and articulate key priorities for the next three years. The first three goals outline CLBL's influence, impact, and partnership with the field, alumni, and industry, building on its leading-edge programs and deep relationships to advance agricultural innovation and natural resource stewardship. Goals four and five outline the important work of bolstering CLBL's organizational infrastructure – investing in the team that delivers on the mission day in and day out—and building the organization's long-term financial sustainability.

Methodology

CLBL engaged Third Plateau, a social impact strategy firm, to facilitate its strategic planning process in 2022. This plan reflects the collective thinking and commitment of representatives across CLBL's network.

In partnership with the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, Board of Directors, and CLBL staff, Third Plateau engaged in a three-phase planning process. The first phase focused on understanding CLBL's current state, including the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. As part of the process, Third Plateau conducted 11 virtual stakeholder interviews, two alumni focus groups, and received 30 survey responses from key partners. Using this information, Third Plateau facilitated a day-long planning retreat to revisit CLBL's vision, mission, and theory of change, and identify three-year goals for the organization to make significant progress toward its vision in the coming years. Key staff members participated in strategy brainstorms to flesh out key priorities, strategies, and tactics. All staff participated in a process to identify, define, and operationalize a set of shared values, and a subcommittee reviewed staff input and feedback to help guide this process. Drafts were shared with all staff and board, and



feedback was gathered through live sessions and surveys. From there, a subset of staff representatives developed implementation timelines and milestones for each goal.

OUR PURPOSE

Vision

A resilient food system, supported by and for California communities.

Mission

Our mission is to inspire, educate, and cultivate future generations of farmers, agricultural leaders, and natural resource stewards.

Values

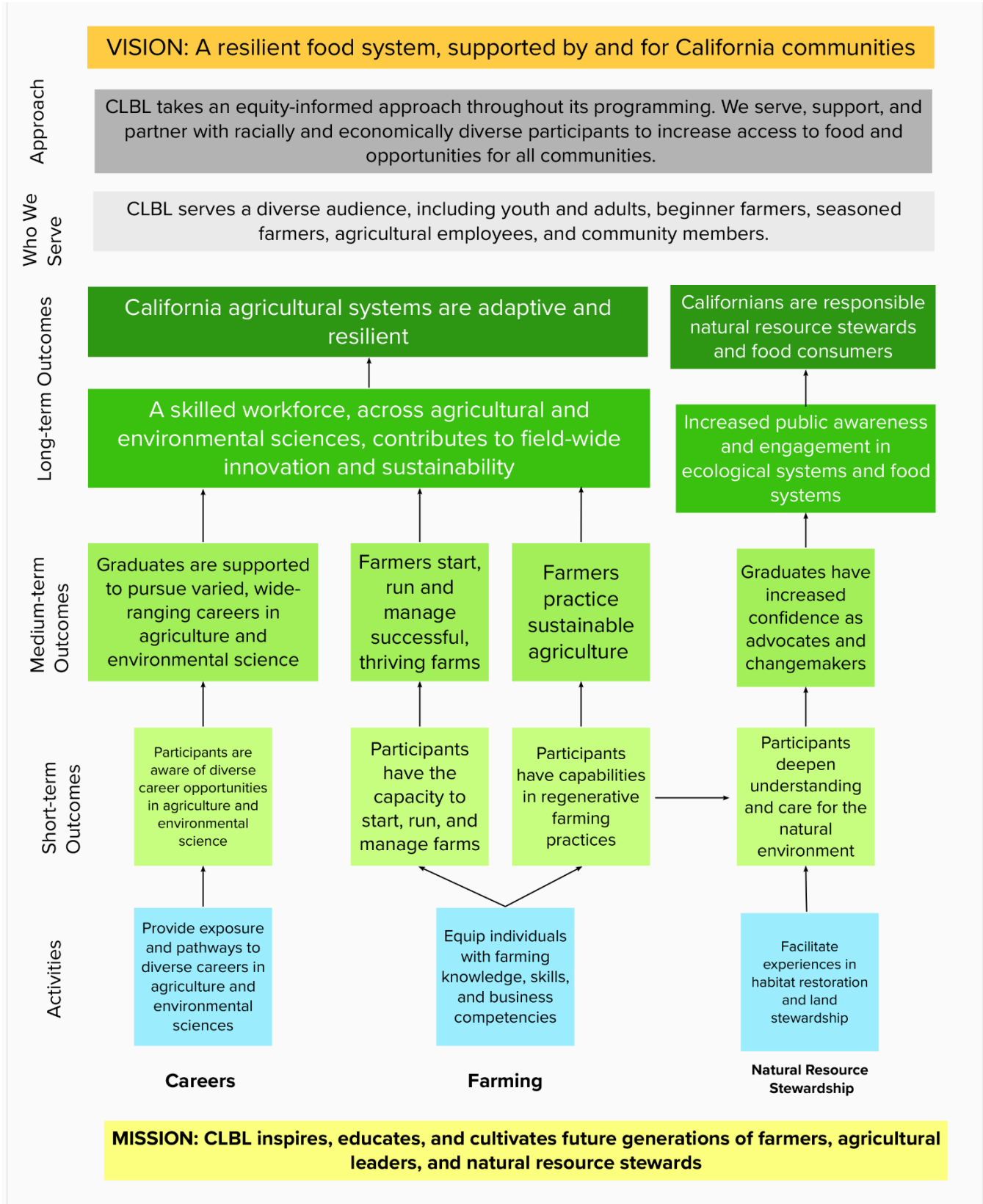
CONNECTION: We are connectors and bridge builders. We center community and relationships in all that we do. We find joy, opportunity, and meaning in gathering and offering care, gratitude, and support to one another. We value partnership and collaboration with our teammates, communities, participants, and partners.

PURPOSE: We are passionate about our work because we are committed to making a positive impact within our interconnected communities, food systems, and environment.

OPPORTUNITY: We are curious learners, proactive innovators, and creative optimists. We seek to gather and understand diverse opinions and perspectives, knowing there's always room to learn and grow.

BALANCE: We recognize that taking care of ourselves and each other is a key part of maintaining our ability to advance our mission over the long-term. As a team, we nurture a culture of wellbeing, and acknowledge and support each other. We practice openness, respect, and generosity to create space for people to belong and thrive.

THEORY OF CHANGE



THREE-YEAR GOALS

To advance toward our vision and mission, we will prioritize the following goals over the next three years:

Goal 1: Become a statewide innovation hub.

Goal 2: Empower our alumni to thrive.

Goal 3: Establish the Center for Land-Based Learning as a recognized educational partner in workforce development for California’s agricultural industry.

Goal 4: Equip our team members to grow and lead.

Goal 5: Ensure our financial sustainability.

To reach our goals (**bolded in blue**), we will pursue the targeted strategies (**bolded**) and tactics (underlined) below.

1. **Become a statewide innovation hub.**

More than ever, cross-sector innovation, collaboration, and coordination will be critical to working toward a regenerative, integrated, and equitable food system. At the intersection of agriculture, ecology, science, and technology, the Center for Land-Based Learning is a thought leader, champion, and connector. We strive to deepen models and practices that advance equity and inclusion within the sector. Our headquarters offers a unique setting to showcase our programs and convene partners and community, and we will leverage our statewide team to support fieldwide learning and innovation across California.

To accomplish this, we will:

a. **Convene, connect, and build a community engaged in advancing innovation in agriculture, food systems, and ecology.**

- i. Host events and gatherings. We will host formal speaker events, informal farmer gatherings, and community convenings to celebrate and highlight agricultural innovation. We will invite our partners to co-host collaborative events and to use our headquarters for relevant workshops and events.
- ii. Recruit partners, board members, and sponsors in innovative agriculture and technology spaces. Leveraging our location in Woodland, we will continue to build connections and grow our network with organizations, institutions, and

individuals at the intersection of agriculture, technology, research, and innovation.

- iii. Deepen community engagement. Leveraging the Mobile Farmer’s Market, we will engage, partner, and serve local underrepresented and underserved communities.

b. Research, document, and disseminate model practices.

- i. Complete a carbon farm plan. We will develop a framework for farms to identify maximum carbon sequestration goals and outline steps and approaches to accomplish those goals. We will share our framework to advocate for agricultural sustainability policy change.
- ii. Document and showcase research and initiatives at the Maples Farm. We will use visual storytelling to capture our learnings and share knowledge and best practices.
- iii. Leverage funding opportunities to support research and innovation. The growing demand for innovative solutions has led to an increase in new funding opportunities for conservation and climate research and development. We will assess new funding opportunities as they arise, considering fit, capacity, and alignment with our strategies and mission.
- iv. Partner with strategic collaborators, including companies and universities, to conduct research and disseminate findings. Integrating partner research into our programs is a win-win. It will provide on the ground learning opportunities for our participants, while supporting our partners to explore and advance agricultural innovation.

c. Develop a clear, consistent, and cohesive brand and messaging to highlight the innovation and impact of CLBL's programs.

- i. Refine our communications plan. We will refine our communications strategies and create a clear communications plan. We will assess what is and is not working and set new objectives and tactics. We will ensure we’re utilizing the correct messaging platforms to effectively reach our audience segments and build out a communications calendar.
- ii. Simplify and streamline organizational branding. We will revisit and revamp individual program branding to build more consistent messaging across programs. We will update the CLBL style guide to increase consistency and support public brand recognition.
- iii. Revamp the CLBL website. We will update the CLBL website to support easier navigation and clear communication about programs.

2. Empower our alumni to thrive.

We will formalize the support we offer to alumni as they move from our programs into the next phase of their careers and work toward achieving their long-term goals. We will build a statewide alumni network for graduates to connect with one another, seek support, and learn about new opportunities. We will host regional events for continued learning and build pathways for alumni to connect with CLBL partners to explore career opportunities. We will increase communication and deepen relationships with alumni, who represent a wide variety of roles and sectors in the food system and can serve as ambassadors to our programs, expand our partnerships, and offer important insights about trends in the field.

To accomplish this, we will:

a. Build a supportive and interconnected alumni community.

- i. Host alumni networking events. We will host fun and engaging networking events for alumni to connect, offer support to one another, and learn from one another.
- ii. Establish regional alumni cohorts. We will support alumni to share local news and opportunities and gather for networking events. The alumni manager will play an active role in establishing a thriving alumni network and build systems for the network to continue to grow organically.
- iii. Gather and highlight stories to celebrate alumni achievements. By showcasing alumni success stories, we will learn about CLBL's impact, expand the alumni network, and deepen alumni connections.
- iv. Create opportunities for alumni to give back to the CLBL community. We will welcome past participants to come back to give talks and demos, provide mentorship, and participate in field days and recruitment events.

b. Provide opportunities and facilitate professional connections for alumni to learn, grow, and succeed.

- i. Offer educational workshops to alumni. We will offer a variety of ongoing learning opportunities to alumni, including workshops on emerging innovations and trends.
- ii. Host and facilitate networking opportunities with potential employers. Tapping into our networks, we will facilitate opportunities for alumni to meet and connect with potential employers across farming, agriculture, science, and technology.
- iii. Facilitate strategic linkages to preferred partners and resources. Our alumni often come to us for referrals to resources and providers, such as recommended law firms. We will build out a list of preferred partners and resources on our website and share out through communications with the alumni network.

c. Establish internal infrastructure to support robust alumni programs.

- i. Conduct an alumni needs assessment to understand the needs and challenges of alumni. The results of this survey will help us provide tailored content to address common barriers, challenges, and interest areas. We will gather data to understand the unique needs for various alumni segments (age, region, program, interest areas, language, ethnicity, etc.) to design offerings accordingly.
- ii. Consistently gather, store, and utilize alumni data through Bloomerang. We will keep a database of alumni records to better understand career pathways and demographic data. We will keep up-to-date information on alumni employment. We will gather alumni information as they graduate CLBL, as well as through an annual survey.
- iii. Hire an alumni manager to oversee all CLBL alumni programming. We will add this critical role to our staff to ensure alumni programming is prioritized and well-managed.
- iv. Build staff capacity across CLBL to support alumni. We will train all team members on Bloomerang, to ensure consistent and regular data entry. We will create and update lists of resources and preferred strategic partners, for staff to share and offer consistent referrals to alumni.

3. Establish CLBL as a recognized educational provider in workforce development for California's agricultural industry.

While our graduates pursue a wide array of opportunities across food systems, we've garnered a strong reputation related to careers in small and urban farms. While we will continue to support that work, we will intentionally expand our reach and pathways with larger-scale agricultural operations. We will deepen our relationships with these partners and create a two-way bridge, offering programs to upskill current workers and providing connections to alumni well-positioned for such jobs.

To accomplish this, we will:

- a. **Partner with industry leaders to understand current and emerging trends related to critical skills and knowledge for current and incoming workforce.**
 - i. Build relationships and engage with key partners. We will engage with diverse stakeholders (e.g. industry boards, workforce development committees) to explore the workforce development needs of large-scale farms and agricultural operations. We will pursue creative partnerships with industry organizations, such as service companies (e.g. irrigation, chemical), industry associations, and government bodies to inform our programming.
 - ii. Leverage our alumni network. We will maintain strong relationships with alumni working in larger-scale agricultural operations for their input on important and emerging skills and potential CLBL programs.

- iii. Expand industry leader representation on the CFA apprenticeship committee. We will grow the existing advisory group to include additional industry leaders, who can share their perspectives on trends in the field and workforce development needs. This group will help ensure open lines of communication with industry and will inform program development.

b. Develop and offer a suite of workforce development programs for the larger-scale agricultural industry.

- i. Design a suite of programs to develop skills related to large-scale farming and agricultural operations. We will design and offer programs, workshops, and certifications that are relevant and attractive to 1) current employees, looking to expand and grow their skillset; 2) individuals who have some on-farm experience but lack formal training; and 3) young people interested in pursuing careers at large farms. We will additionally offer programs and workshops in Spanish for Spanish-speaking participants, such as the Spanish-language Apprenticeship program.
- ii. Link students to local partners, trainers, and experts to learn skills not taught by CLBL. We will coordinate with partners to help students access opportunities to gain skills related to emerging technological innovations, such as operating and maintaining autonomous tractors. We will serve as a central hub, coordinating with our partner network to connect talent to unique training opportunities.

c. Identify and recruit participants well-positioned for careers within larger agricultural operations.

- i. Leverage partnerships to recruit industry workers. We will tap new and existing relationships with industry to identify workers interested in upskilling.
- ii. Advertise programming on new and existing platforms. We will use our recruitment platforms and partner networks to enroll participants interested or experienced in large-scale farming, management, and agricultural operations skills.

4. Equip our team members to grow and lead.

Our passionate and committed staff is one of our greatest organizational strengths, and we will build the supports and systems to position them for success. We are eager to build out staff capacity and organizational infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing team. We will invest in ongoing learning and professional development, and build opportunities for internal career growth. We will strengthen systems to share institutional knowledge, processes, and relationships, allowing staff to better support one another and take ownership within their roles.



To accomplish this, we will:

- a. Ensure our staffing model meets programmatic and organizational needs.**
 - i. Identify, budget for, and fill gaps in staffing capacity. We will prioritize stabilization and will strategically grow our team, including programmatic, administrative, and operational positions.
 - ii. Create a standard process to assess capacity and resource implications when considering or taking on new programs, projects, and initiatives. A clear process to outline resource needs will support increased cross-departmental planning, communication, and collaboration.
 - iii. Bolster operations and administration. We will expand our operations and administration team and expand finance and human resources capacities.

- b. Create intentional growth opportunities for CLBL team members.**
 - i. Assess the professional development needs and interests of staff. We will explore what types of learning and growth opportunities will best set up staff for success, in their current roles and beyond.
 - ii. Implement formal staff development plans. We will determine a process for staff and their supervisors to work together to create professional development plans, ensuring supervisors provide support and accountability.
 - iii. Provide professional development trainings and workshops teamwide, to support ongoing learning and growth. All-team learning will encourage growth and development, while building shared language, skills, and connection across the team.
 - iv. Implement succession planning. We will identify critical responsibilities, competencies, and institutional knowledge and relationships. We will cross-train staff to support long-term sustainability and increase shared knowledge and understanding across CLBL.

- c. Strengthen CLBL organizational culture and communication.**
 - i. Strengthen organizational culture and morale. We will develop a culture plan that will identify shared organizational values and outline key ways we will practice those values, through recruitment, onboarding, ongoing support, and accountability. We will continue to refer to and adapt our culture plan as we grow. This culture plan will serve as the basis for establishing shared expectations and building trust across the team.
 - ii. Facilitate internal learning and reflection related to diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and culture. We will create space for staff to engage in conversations about these key facets of our culture. We will continually, openly communicate how these elements manifest in our organization and in our work.

- iii. Demystify organizational processes, programs, and decisions. In an effort to break down silos, we will share organizational updates and key decisions with the full team.
- iv. Intentionally build team cohesion, collaboration, and understanding. We will create opportunities for staff members to connect, learn from one another, and understand goals and initiatives happening across the organization.

d. Establish and maintain clear human resource policies and systems.

- i. Establish clear HR policies, procedures, and systems. We will develop clear policies around communication systems, file storing, credit card use, and other processes critical to our organizational health. We will build out structures to communicate clear expectations related to compensation.
- ii. Improve staff onboarding. We will formalize structures to effectively and consistently orient new employees to CLBL's organizational culture, programs, approaches, and policies.
- iii. Update CLBL's organizational chart and staffing structure. We will evaluate our current organizational structure to identify inefficiencies and/or missing positions. We will then make necessary adjustments to build an effective organizational structure.
- iv. Update and maintain the CLBL employee handbook. We will collate existing organizational policies in a centralized handbook. We will identify and create policies that are missing and will update the handbook annually to ensure it is up to date on any policies that may have changed. Our employee handbook will serve as a shared understanding of CLBL's policies and systems.
- v. Create formal pathways to gather and address staff needs and concerns. We will develop a system for staff to provide feedback. We will regularly engage staff for their input, fostering a sense of openness and transparency, and we will also provide staff with the opportunity to provide feedback anonymously.

5. Ensure our financial sustainability.

To ensure the long-term success of the organization, we will expand, deepen, and bolster our funding base. We will amplify a compelling and inspiring story about our organizational impact to build connections with new donors and engage existing ones. We will tighten internal processes to support collaborative programmatic fundraising and grant writing. Within the first six months of implementation, we will define our three-year fundraising goals. We will grow our capacity to pursue and successfully fundraise unrestricted and programmatic funding over the next three years to deliver on our mission and build our strategic reserves.

To accomplish this, we will:

a. Develop a clear funding model.

- i. Assess current financial standing. We will review current expenditures and revenue sources (restricted vs. unrestricted, grants, contracts, etc.) to identify gaps in the budget.
- ii. Determine three-year financial targets. In collaboration with the board, we will set revenue targets for the next three years, including per-year revenue growth, fundraising goals, and level of reserves.
- iii. Create a revenue strategy. To meet our three-year development goals, we will calculate the number and size of gifts and donor prospects necessary for CLBL to meet its fundraising goals. We will consider our current donor base and the landscape for agricultural funding, to anticipate and outline likely funding streams over the next three years.

b. Establish clear systems and processes for fundraising and development, for both restricted and unrestricted funding.

- i. Map out roles, responsibilities, and processes for fundraising. We will build out a clear process for fundraising and grants, including who is responsible for identifying funding opportunities, writing and submitting grants, where to save and track proposals, when and how to engage relevant program staff, and when and how to communicate with the development team, finance, CEO, and leadership team.
- ii. Develop a process to strategically assess new funding opportunities. Knowing we are not equipped or interested in applying for every funding opportunity that comes our way, we will create a clear process for vetting new grant opportunities before developing and submitting proposals.
- iii. Host training for team members engaged in grant writing and program design. We will share the new fundraising processes with staff and will evolve our process with periodic trial and feedback.

c. Craft compelling messaging to communicate with donors.

- i. Develop a budget narrative. We will draft language to thoughtfully communicate our fundraising goals. We will highlight our current programs, initiatives, and current organizational context to justify our budgetary needs to donors, which will demonstrate our forethought and fiscal responsibility.
- ii. Develop key messages. We will create short, compelling descriptions to describe why our work matters to current and prospective donors. With support across the team, we will gather and share impact stories from across our many program areas.

d. Strategically manage relationships with current, prospective, and previous donors.

- i. Identify prospective donors. We will conduct prospect research to support targeted outreach to new donors. We will explore funding opportunities in new, supporting sectors.
- ii. Engage prospective donors. We will cultivate relationships with prospective donors by leveraging existing connections and inviting donors to join CLBL events or programs. We will also prepare to conduct cold outreach for potential donors using our enhanced marketing, communications, and storytelling.
- iii. Solicit funding from donors. Once we have established a relationship with a prospective donor and have gained clarity around their interests, motivation, and capacity to give, we will make our case for support and ask for a funding commitment. We will determine the best ways to do so, including implementing campaigns aligned to various motivations across our donor segments.
- iv. Steward donors. We will continue to engage, inform, and build relationships with donors. We will create opportunities for donors to get involved in our events and programs. We will develop and implement funder partnership plans (e.g. highlight major funders on CLBL website, case studies, etc.)
- v. Leverage and support board members, staff, and alumni to build relationships with new donors. We will tap our CLBL champions to lend their time, networks, and resources to support the organization's continued sustainability.