The Seeing Eye®

STRATEGIC PLAN
FY2027–FY2030



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Removing Barriers, Expanding Possibilities

A roadmap to guide The Seeing Eye into the next 100 years of enhanced independence, dignity and confidence.

Approved by the Board of Trustees, 2026



Morris Frank and Buddy with co-founder Dorothy Harrison Eustis. Their partnership launched the guide dog movement in America.

At a Glance

1929
Founded as the first guide dog school in the United States

~19,000
Seeing Eye partnerships created since our founding

1,400+
Seeing Eye teams working today across the U.S. and Canada

100%
Privately funded. We receive no government funding.

A Message from Our Leadership

In 1928, a young man named Morris Frank and a German shepherd named Buddy proved to a crowd of reporters in New York City that a guide dog could open the world to a person who is blind. The Seeing Eye was founded the following year. Nearly a century later, that partnership remains at the heart of everything we do.

As The Seeing Eye approaches its 100th anniversary in 2029, we do so from a position of strength: a world-class breeding and training program, a dedicated staff, generous supporters, and graduates who show every day what independence looks like. But strength is not a reason to stand still. The world our graduates navigate is changing quickly. Veterinary costs are rising faster than inflation. Access to essential travel skills is uneven. Rideshare drivers, businesses, and public spaces still too often turn guide dog teams away. And new technology, including artificial intelligence, is reshaping how people who are blind or low vision move through the world.

This plan is our answer. It was built by listening to graduates, staff, volunteers, and trustees, and it commits us to a simple idea: the people who could benefit from a Seeing Eye® dog should not be kept from that partnership by cost, readiness, or a closed door. Over the next four years, we will remove those barriers, embrace the tools that help our teams thrive, and make sure The Seeing Eye is stronger at 100 than it has ever been.

Our centennial is not only a milestone to celebrate. It is a moment to recommit to the students whose lives depend on this work, to the dogs and puppy raisers who make it possible, and to the belief that independence is not a privilege but a right. Thank you for walking this path with us.

Karen E. Leies
President & CEO

Michael H. Mittelman
Chair, Board of Trustees

> **“Morris Frank fought for the right to walk through any door with Buddy at his side. Nearly a century later, we are still opening doors, and this plan commits us to opening more of them.”**
>
> Karen Keninger, Trustee



OUR STORY

Who We Are

Seeing Eye teams navigate some of the busiest streets in North America.

Our founders did more than train dogs. Morris Frank challenged "No Dogs Allowed" policies in hotels, restaurants, and on public transportation, and within 20 years nearly every U.S. state and Canadian province had adopted laws protecting guide dog teams. That advocacy helped pave the way for the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Today, nearly 19,000 Seeing Eye partnerships have been created since our founding, and more than 1,400 Seeing Eye teams are working across the United States and Canada. Our instructors continue to support every team long after graduation, by phone, by video, and in person.

The Seeing Eye receives no government funding. Our work is made possible entirely by the generosity of individuals, foundations, corporations, and those who remember us in their estate plans.

How We Built This Plan

Our planning process began in January 2026 and unfolded over seven months, guided by an independent strategic planning advisor and shaped by the people closest to our mission.

7 months of planning, January to July 2026	**4** board-led working groups	**200+** graduates shared their experiences	**5** goals to carry us to our centennial and beyond

Who We Listened To

1
Surveys of graduates, trustees, and staff to build a shared understanding of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

2
A planning retreat bringing together the Board of Trustees and senior leadership to name the long-term challenges and unmet opportunities ahead.

3
Listening sessions with graduates and with professionals in orientation and mobility, so the people we serve could tell us directly what stands in their way.

4
Visioning sessions with trustees and staff, followed by working sessions to refine our mission, vision, values, and goals.

5
An all-staff retreat so that every department could help shape the plan and see its own role in it.

6
Operational planning in which leadership and staff turned each goal into concrete actions, timelines, and measures of success, supported by a multi-year financial plan.

The Questions That Shaped Our Plan

After the retreat, trustees and staff formed four working groups. Each one took on a question that matters deeply to the future of guide dog partnership.

Access
How can The Seeing Eye reach more people who could benefit from a Seeing Eye dog, including by reducing the economic and readiness barriers to guide dog use?

Technology
How can we bring new technology into our work, lead in integrated services, and use artificial intelligence responsibly for efficiency and effectiveness?

Marketing
How should we raise our voice to deepen advocacy, expand public education, grow support, and better serve every guide dog handler, whether or not they know us yet?

Resources
What financial, organizational, and physical resources will keep The Seeing Eye healthy and sustainable for generations to come?

The Board of Trustees approved our new strategic framework of mission, vision, values, and goals in June 2026, and approved the full four-year plan in the fall of 2026.

Our Mission, Vision, and Values

OUR MISSION

We enhance the independence, dignity, and confidence of people who are blind and low vision through life-changing partnerships with Seeing Eye dogs.

OUR VISION

To be our community's trusted partner in blind independence, where guide dogs, technology, supportive services, and advocacy converge to eliminate barriers and expand what's possible.

Our Values

Mission Focus
Every decision begins with the people we serve and the dogs who serve them.

Community
We are strongest together with our graduates, puppy raisers, volunteers, donors, and partners.

Excellence
We hold ourselves to the highest standards in breeding, training, instruction, and care.

Collaboration
We work across teams and with peer organizations to achieve more than any of us could alone.

Integrity
We are honest, transparent, and accountable in everything we do.

Stewardship
We care for every gift, every dog, and every resource entrusted to us.

Five Goals for Our Second Century

1. **Remove barriers to guide dog partnership**
2. **Raise our visibility**
3. **Embrace technology**
4. **Build smarter systems**
5. **Sustain our strength**



GOAL 1

Remove the Barriers to Guide Dog Partnership

Healthy dogs make confident partners. The Veterinary Financial Assistance Fund helps keep them that way.

Seeing Eye teams are used to going around obstacles. Our goal is to remove them entirely.

When we asked our graduates what stands between people and a guide dog, three barriers came up again and again: economic, readiness, and access.

Economic barriers: the Veterinary Financial Assistance Fund

According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the cost of veterinary services has risen roughly 67 percent over the last decade, far outpacing general inflation. No handler should ever have to weigh their dog's health against their household budget.

Informed by an in-depth study of our graduates' veterinary needs and the practices of peer organizations, we are piloting a new Veterinary Financial Assistance Fund in 2027.

Up to $750

Routine and chronic care, beginning January 2027

For handlers who meet need-based criteria: annual exams, vaccines, and parasite prevention.

Up to $5,000

Emergency care, beginning July 2027

Available to all Seeing Eye graduates for approved emergency veterinary care.

Built to last: we will evaluate the pilot after its first year and refine it so that it remains fair, transparent, and sustainable.

> **"The new fund is designed so that no handler has to weigh their dog's health against their household budget."**
>
> Michael H. Mittelman, Chair, Board of Trustees

Readiness barriers

Orientation and mobility training

Some people who want a guide dog are not yet ready for our program because they have not had the chance to build the orientation and mobility (O&M) skills needed for safe, independent travel. Many O&M programs are underfunded, and refresher training can be hard to find.

Beginning in fiscal year 2027, The Seeing Eye will pilot its own O&M skill-building classes, then expand them in the years that follow based on demand, so that more people can arrive in Morristown ready to succeed in guide dog use.

Access barriers

Advocacy and public education

More than 35 years after the ADA, guide dog teams are still denied access to rideshares, businesses, and public spaces. Building on our first-ever State of Access report card, which reviews every state's laws alongside the lived experience of handlers, we will:

- **Advance legislation** in New Jersey to improve employee education about the rights of service dog teams.
- **Educate law enforcement** so officers know the law and can help when access is denied.
- **Launch a public service campaign** to build understanding of guide dog teams among the general public.



> **"For nearly a century, our graduates have shown the world what independence looks like. Now it is our job to make sure everyone who could benefit from a Seeing Eye dog knows we are here and the world sees The Seeing Eye as the leader we are."**
>
> Michael Amoruso, Trustee

GOAL 2

Raise Our Visibility

The more people who know The Seeing Eye, the more lives we can change.

Many people who could benefit from a Seeing Eye dog, and many who could help, have never heard our story. We will change that.

What we will do

- **Launch a multi-year marketing campaign** to raise public awareness and recruit the next generation of students and volunteer puppy raisers.
- **Refresh our brand and website** with clear, accessible brand guidelines and a modernized digital home.
- **Celebrate our centennial** with a dedicated centennial identity and campaign leading to our 100th anniversary in 2029.
- **Reach more future students** through targeted outreach in the blindness community and a new Graduate Ambassadors program that lets our graduates share their experiences in their own words.

GOAL 3

Embrace Technology in Service of Our Mission

Technology will never replace the bond between a handler and a Seeing Eye dog. It can make that partnership even stronger.

Smart glasses, navigation apps, and AI-powered tools are changing daily life for people who are blind or low vision. Our students and graduates deserve guidance on how to use these tools safely alongside their dogs.

What we will do

- **Create a Center for Technology** at The Seeing Eye, beginning with a virtual technology center, to help handlers integrate technology safely and effectively, guided by expert advisors.
- **Integrate AI-powered smart glasses into our curriculum** building on our current pilot so students can learn to use these tools as part of their training.



> **"Technology is changing rapidly, and our graduates deserve trusted guidance in navigating these changes. We will help them take advantage of new technologies that enhance their independence and strengthen the partnership between handler and dog."**
>
> Ira Fuchs, Trustee

GOAL 4

Build Smarter Systems for Better Service

Better information leads to better decisions, and better service for our students, graduates, and supporters.

Behind every successful partnership is a team that depends on sound data, secure systems, and efficient processes.

What we will do

Use artificial intelligence responsibly in our strategic and day-to-day work, guided by clear policies, staff training, and expert advice.

Evaluate and modernize our core systems so information flows easily and supports thoughtful decision-making across the organization.

Strengthen cybersecurity with ongoing training, drills, and protocols that protect the people who trust us with their information.



GOAL 5

Sustain Our Strength for the Next Century

Our dogs, our people, our campus, and our supporters are the foundation of everything we do.

To grow our impact, we must care for the resources that make it possible.

What we will do

- **Grow our community of puppy raisers,** the volunteers who open their homes and hearts to raise Seeing Eye puppies.
- **Maintain best-in-class canine care,** investing in our kennel care team and the health, welfare, and safety of every dog.
- **Deliver exceptional instruction,** creating more partnerships while sustaining the quality our graduates count on.
- **Invest in our facilities,** including a campus master plan, upgrades at our Washington Valley kennels, and a refresh of our Chester campus.
- **Secure lasting support,** including a dedicated campaign for the Veterinary Financial Assistance Fund.
- **Attract and retain talented people,** from staff to volunteers to trustees, who bring diverse perspectives to our work.

> **"This plan is ambitious because our mission demands it. The Board is committed to making sure The Seeing Eye has the people, the facilities, and the resources to deliver on every goal in this plan through our 100th year and beyond."**
>
> OhSang Kwon, Trustee



OUR CENTENNIAL

Looking Ahead to 2029

On our 100th anniversary, The Seeing Eye will celebrate a century of independence, dignity, and confidence for people who are blind or low vision. This plan is how we will honor that legacy: not just by looking back, but by making sure the future of Seeing Eye partnerships is open to everyone who could benefit from one.

Independence is not a privilege but a right.

JOIN US

How You Can Be Part of It

Every goal in this plan depends on a community that believes in our mission. Here is how you can help.

Give

Your gift supports every part of this plan, from the Veterinary Financial Assistance Fund to the next class of students.

Donate to The Seeing Eye

Raise a puppy

Volunteer puppy raisers give future Seeing Eye dogs the foundation they need.

Learn about raising a Seeing Eye puppy

Veterinary Financial Assistance Fund

Graduates and future students can find eligibility details and frequently asked questions online.

Vet fund details and FAQs

Spread the word

Support the rights of guide dog teams and help us make sure every guide dog team is welcomed wherever they go.

Visit The Seeing Eye Advocacy Center

The Seeing Eye®

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