**A Three-Year Strategic Action Plan for the
Western New York Environmental Alliance
(2016-2019)**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Western New York Environmental Alliance was established, through a highly participatory process, with the mission to mobilize change through collective action and collaboration in order to ensure sustainable, thriving ecosystems and communities in Western New York.
In 2008, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo convened area environmental groups, beginning with a series of Congresses that culminated in the creation of the Environmental Declaration and the Shared Agenda for Action in 2009. The process of creating the Shared Agenda lasted several years with over 100 environmental organizations participating. Many of these organizations had been working independently for decades, struggling to make significant progress.

In the first years of the Alliance, the Community Foundation provided the Alliance with meeting space and staff support for networking and organizing around the Shared Agenda. In 2015, as part of its long term vision, the Alliance incorporated as a separate 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, and secured initial funding to retain professional support. In 2016, the Alliance created this *Strategic Action Plan* to establish a broad coalition committed to improve the environment in Western New York.

Planning for A More Effective Coalition

Starting in February of 2016, members of the Alliance's Organizational Capacity Group worked with a consultant to determine goals, strategies, and actions for the organization for the next three years. This process led to the creation of the ***Alliance's Three-Year Strategic Action Plan.***
In developing this plan, the consultant and the Capacity Group: (1) considered new and existing plans and data of the Alliance; (2) involved new and existing board members; (3) determined priority areas of focus; and (4) included an organizational work plan around those areas of focus.

The plan was developed through feedback received in a board survey (100% participation) conducted in March; through a key partner interview held in May with leadership from the Crossroads Collective, including PUSH Buffalo, the Partnership for the Public Good, and Open Buffalo; a key partner interview held in June with leadership from One Region Forward, including the University at Buffalo Regional Institute, , Make Communities, and the WNY Land

Conservancy; in a board retreat hosted in July 2016; and through many meetings throughout year with the Capacity Group and the Alliance board.

This *Strategic Action Plan* document establishes focus areas and goals to include in a work plan for the organization, with strategies and action items for the Alliance to complete over the next three years.

> ***Focus Area I, Capacity Goal:*** *By 2019, the Alliance will realize a fiscal strength and stability sufficient to expand the capacity and focus of the organization to more effectively collaborate around regional priorities, shared projects, and campaigns.*
>
> ***Focus Area II, Inclusion Goal:*** *In the next three years, the Alliance will insure the inclusion of all voices, especially the frontlines where people live in communities that disproportionately suffer from environmental justice.*
>
> ***Focus Area III, Campaign Goal:*** *By 2017, the Alliance will have a process and structure for campaign identification and development, to focus on four or five regional priorities, engage member-organizations and the public, and advocate and mobilize policymakers' support.*
>
> ***Focus Area IV, Membership Goal:*** *In 2016 to 2019, the Alliance will empower member-organizations to focus communication, education, and fundraising efforts to collaborate around regional priorities.*

How This Document Is Organized

The *Strategic Action Plan* tackles a number of issues and is organized by the following categories and sub-categories:

Goals – Indicators of success toward achieving the Alliance's mission and vision in a way that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (S.M.A.R.T.). Each goal will include "The Story Behind the Goal" with context specific to the organization.

Strategies – This category encompasses areas of concentrated effort that will direct and utilize resources (including staffing, equipment, partnerships, money, technical or in-kind assistance, et cetera) toward achieving its "parent" goal.

Action Steps – These are the specific activities, programs and projects that are identified as necessary to execute the strategy and achieve the overall goal.

Plan Collaborators

The Alliance would like to first acknowledge the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo and the Overbrook Foundation for their guidance and support in making this plan possible.

The Alliance also wishes to thank the following board members, plan consultants, and partners for their guidance and participation in this process:

Alexandra McPherson, _WNYEA Capacity Group_
Lynda Schneekloth, _WNYEA Capacity Group_
Rick Stockton, _WNYEA Capacity Group_
Rebekah Williams, _Strategic Planning Consultant_
Clayton Shanahan, _Assistant to Consultant_
Michael Benzin, _WNYEA Visiting Director_
Ryan McPherson, _WNYEA Board President_
Derek Nichols, _WNYEA Board Vice President_
Arthur Wheaton, _WNYEA Board Treasurer_
Elizabeth Walsh, _WNYEA Board Secretary_
Justin Booth, _Board Member_
Jay Burney, _Board Member_
Brian Dold, _Board Member_
Nate Drag, _Board Member_
Deb Gondek, _Board Member_

Jim Howe, _Board Member_
Robert Knoer, _Board Member (Non-Voting)_
Rebecca Newberry, _Board Member_
Cara Matteliano, _CFGB Vice President Programs_
Allie Urbanski, _CFGB Community Impact Associate_
Anthony Armstrong, _Make Communities_
Aaron Bartley, _PUSH Buffalo_
Rahwa Ghirmatzion, _PUSH Buffalo & Ujima_
Franchelle Hart, _Open Buffalo_
Sam Magavern, _Cornell ILR & Partnership for the Public Good_
Bart Roberts, _UB Regional Institute_
Jajean Rose Burney, _WNY Land Conservancy_
Robert Shibley, _UB School of Architecture & Planning_

CONTENTS

CAPACITY. GOAL I: *By 2019, the Alliance will realize a fiscal strength and stability sufficient to expand the capacity and focus of the organization to more effectively collaborate around regional priorities.*

Story Behind the Goal: In 2008, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo along with the local environmental community convened and supported the development of the WNY Environmental Alliance. Now, as a stand-alone organization, the Alliance is committed to building the capacity it needs to more effectively collaborate around regional priorities.

In 2009, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo launched the GrowWNY website as an online venue for our region's environmental community. Funding for the creation and maintenance of GrowWNY came from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Several years later the Knight Foundation funded the Community Foundation, yet again, to create the Grow 716 mobile platform to extend the reach of GrowWNY to reach people via text and through smartphones and devices. In 2012 and 2013, the Community Foundation and the WNY Environmental Alliance board created a proposal to transition responsibility for the website and its maintenance to the Alliance. The Alliance now has full ownership of this major investment.

In 2015, the Alliance was recognized as an independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization, its board revised and strengthened its by-laws to align with requirements introduced by the 2013 New York State Nonprofit Revitalization Act, and it created an administrative framework and system for back-office support. The membership elected a Board of Directors that is committed to establishing capacity to develop and meet measurable benchmarks towards the goals and strategies identified in Our Shared Agenda for Action.

The Alliance's impact can be exemplified in several successful initiatives. First, the Transportation Working Group has seen success in leveraging more than $200,000 in additional resources to positively influence the development and implementation of complete street renovations in Buffalo. Through successful advocacy the Growing (aka Food, Agriculture & Gardens) Working Group led to the formation of a Food Policy Council for the region and focused the Council's work on the concerns of people living in communities affected by environmental injustices, who rely primarily on food banks and food pantries. In addition, the Alliance has played a pivotal role in state climate justice policies and its *Mapping Waste Report* is a critical product that has informed conversations with elected officials. The Alliance also led the discussion about smart, sustainable use and development of the Outer Harbor by making sure the environment is positioned at the front end of decision making -- which resulted in fundamentally chaining the proposed master plan for the area.

To support these and other efforts, the Alliance was invited to submit a proposal for a $50,000 grant from the Overbrook Foundation to further develop a collaborative environmental movement that addresses climate change, urban regeneration, and equity. That proposal was a match for $50,000 awarded from the Community Foundation, and in December of 2015 the Overbrook Foundation awarded the Alliance the grant.

The Alliance leadership knows that much more can be achieved through strategic collaboration. It also knows that dedicated staff is necessary to convene groups and support integrated efforts. To continue this collaborative spirit and diversify funding moving forward, the Alliance will: (1) secure staff support, (2) develop a revenue plan to leverage foundation dollars, and (3) establish a professionally-managed communications portal using the GrowWNY website.

Strategies & Action Steps:

Strategy A: Secure staff support for the Alliance to provide strategic direction for the organization.

- Action 1: Create and circulate job description for Visiting Director to focus on fundraising and strategy for the organization. *[Accomplished June 2016]*

- Action 2: Hire Visiting Director. *[Accomplished September 2016]*

Strategy B: Leverage foundation dollars and consolidate responsibilities for back-office supports by partnering with area organizations.

- Action 1: Revisit conversations with One Region Forward about their capability to support back-office functions (such as communications, data capture and tools.)

- Action 2: Engage key partners to help plan, publicize, and facilitate Annual Congress (see "Goal 3, Strategy C" on page 16).

- Action 3: Apply for a High Road Fellow (the *Partnership for the Public Good's* application for a High Road Fellow is due each September or October.)

Strategy C: Develop a comprehensive three-year revenue development plan that supports collaboration among members, drives new innovations in realizing objectives and provides for Alliance programming needs. The model would utilize earned and unearned income revenue streams.

- Action 1: Both as a revenue development tool and as a service to Alliance members, the Alliance will develop a set of very attractive "fee-for-service" supports that would be offered to its members. Services the Alliance can offer organizations could include:
  - Conferences, trainings, and workshops;
  - Program development;
  - Facilitation services;
  - Communications and promotion; and
  - Grant-writing technical assistance.

  Services would be offered by Alliance staff or in some cases one member could retain the services of an individual who worked for another member to fulfill a short-term need, with the Alliance acting as a broker.

- Action 2: Communicate to member-organizations that budgets for grants requested through the Alliance will include funding to help sustain the efforts of the Alliance on behalf of the

membership. When asked to provide a letter of support to a member-organization as part of a grant application, the Alliance will ask to be included in the grant as a partner.

- Action 3: Consider offering Alliance resources and talents to support organizations outside our region who are looking for training or workshop solutions and who might be interested in learning from the successes of some of our more innovative members.

- Action 4: Engage the board better in addressing its responsibilities as the fiduciary for the Alliance, establishing a strong administrative core for the Alliance, and investing themselves in the pursuit of the Alliance's revenue goals.

- Action 5: Identify priorities and key projects, events, and initiatives of the Alliance to leverage current funding in securing new funding from national sources, such as around Outer Harbor Development, climate justice, etc. Suggestions:
    - Determine whether there are opportunities to submit joint proposals to leverage and align the Alliance's climate justice efforts with those of key partners.
    - Engage in conversations with PUSH Buffalo and NY Renews regarding potential collaboration.
    - Revisit conversations with UB Regional Institute about their project with NYSERDA to engage local communities in adopting clean energy policies, programs and projects to assess opportunities for deeper Alliance involvement
    - Develop joint funding proposals with the One Region Forward sustainable development plan.

Strategy D. Determine the feasibility of shared space opportunities through the Lake Effect Center

- Action 1: Draft initial vision for the Center and guidelines for assessing its use and viability

- Action 2: Issue RFP for Lake Effect Center Feasibility Study *[Accomplished August 2016]*

- Action 3: Retain third-party to conduct Feasibility Study [Accomplished October 2016]

- Action 4: If warranted by a positive feasibility study outcome, develop plans to pursue funding, site, and partners to create the Lake Effect Center.

Strategy E: Establish a strong professionally-managed communication program that supports Alliance internal and external communications needs, the GrowWNY website, and Alliance's social media platforms.

- Action 1: Retain a dedicated Communications Manager to focus on Alliance communications and the GrowWNY website. *[Accomplished October 2016]*

- Action 2: Develop a comprehensive communication strategy and program that supports outreach efforts by Alliance members, leverages existing communication channels, leads message development, and attracts new supporters.

- Action 3: Provide media, communications, and messaging toolkits that groups and organizers can rapidly disseminate (similar to short video clips Crossroads Collective developed for their "May Day Party for the Movement".)

INCLUSION. GOAL II: *In the next three years, the Alliance will insure inclusion of voices from the frontlines, from people living in communities that disproportionately suffer from environmental injustice, and will raise awareness of human dependency on the earth and its ecosystems.*

Story Behind the Goal: Due to a history saturated with decisions made by developers and companies seeking only to raise their bottom line, Western New Yorkers today deal with a legacy of deep environmental contamination and economic inequalities. Some have benefited from the wealth brought to this region through our industrial heritage, but many have been left behind and have suffered significant impacts.

Further, and in the name of economic development, without gaining relevant public input or considering environmental impacts, contracts were signed that literally changed our region's landscape and ruined critical habitat and ecosystems. A central mission of the WNYEA is to ensure the wellbeing of the ecosystems of WNY in their full diversity for generations to come.

The attitudes that brought us this form of economic development in WNY are rooted deeply in our culture. We acted as if economic development was in conflict with environmental stewardship and social justice. This cultural belief reflects a deep separation from nature and its sustenance of all life, including our own and those of our near and distant neighbors. From this distorted view of separation, a minority on the planet have used their relative power to exploit others as well as the earth.

A more holistic and sustainable development model has moved toward the model of a triple bottom line (as diagramed below). This is a significant step forward in bringing environmental stewardship into the discussions of human activity. And yet putting profit on the same level as people and equating both with the planet is based on a cultural norm that is outdated, dangerous to life on earth and at odds with scientists alarming calls to address our climate crisis. We need to work within both an ancient and scientific view of life on earth and our role in it.

The WNYEA affirms that the voices and well-being of frontline communities must be consciously included in the forefront of our collective choices moving forward. Parallel to the development of the Alliance, heightened social and political unrest, and awareness of racial inequities nationwide have created an imperative for traditionally defined environmental organizations to expand their frameworks to include context for sustainability. Environmental and social movements such as the People's Climate

March in New York City, Black Lives Matter, and more recently the Sioux Nation's protest of the Dakota Access Pipeline, are being led by people in frontline communities (e.g., people of color or people in low-income communities who are most impacted by environmental catastrophes and public health issues.) For the Alliance to engage key member-organizations and the public in coming together around regional environmental issues, it will need to begin by speaking in a broader language that embraces social justice, racial equity, and public health for everyone. These conversations need to include representation from a diverse range of individuals and organizations, including the academic, business, civic, faith and other communities.
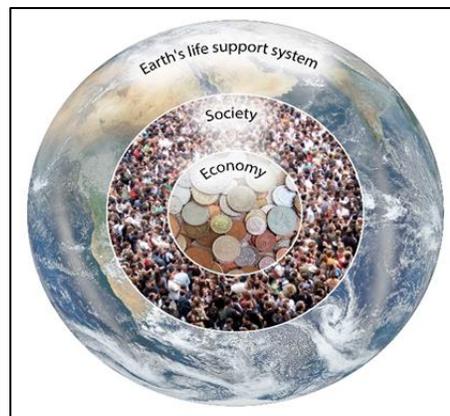
In Buffalo in 2016, environmental and social justice groups were awarded major funding to establish the Crossroads Collective, a collaboration of eight non-profit organizations dedicated to a just transition and climate justice. Four out of eight partner-organizations in the Crossroads Collective are Alliance members: PUSH Buffalo, Partnership for the Public Good, Massachusetts Avenue Project, and Coalition for Economic Justice.

Within the Alliance and through new coalitions and efforts in WNY, the Alliance seeks (1) to lift up those working on environmental justice within the Alliance and to partner with others to ensure citizen participation and justice; and (2) be the voice for justice to the earth and its natural processes.

Strategies & Action Steps:

Strategy A: Stop using the word "environment" as something external and incorporate social and economic values and philosophy in to the Alliance framework.

- Action 1: Initiate discussion within the Alliance about incorporating social/economic justice and racial equity into the Alliance and member-organizations.

- Action 2: Circulate Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing and Melbourne Principles amongst Alliance board and member-organizations to begin exploring how principles are incorporated or can be incorporated into our work.

- Action 3: Determine how to hold the Alliance accountable to social justice, racial equity, and environmental principles.

Strategy B: Create opportunities for dialogue between Alliance members and partners with environmental focused missions with groups engaged in social/economic justice to expand the conversation of the ways in which we can create a culture of life with dignity and justice. Not only is such a culture valuable in its own right, we recognize it as a foundation for economic development required to address to the immediate climate crisis.

- Action 1: Meet with social, economic and environmental justice groups to share experiences and expand the sense of a shared agenda to transform the current culture of exploitation to include

PPG, Open Buffalo, CEJ, PUSH, MAP, Crossroads Collective, Network of Religious Communities, One Region Forward and so on

- Action 2: Develop a cross-sector task force to conduct goal setting and to partner to determine campaigns, messaging, and actions around shared goals such as climate justice.

- Action 3: Collaborate to develop an inclusive narrative that connects climate justice and social justice.

Strategy C: Actively seek opportunities for member-organizations and partners to speak out on issues related to campaigns and basic life sustaining principles in local and regional planning efforts. Engage with key partners to insert citizens and individuals in community dialogue and establish that citizen-participation in planning in an integral part of the culture of the region.

- Action 1: Reconnect with key partners to explore potential to collaborate on training to support citizen engagement in planning to ensure that members speak from an informed position and with confidence in their right to speak. (See Goal 4)

- Action 2: Identify existing and upcoming planning efforts for member-organizations involvement and action. (Include, but not limit to: Outer Harbor Development; Buffalo Green Code; One Region Forward's Regional Plan for Sustainable Development; Buffalo Billion Investment Development Plan; Regional Economic Development Council Prosperity Plan; New York State Energy Plan.)

- Action 3: Review plans identified and planning processes to determine opportunities to engage member-organizations' input and involvement. Assist in preparing messages, arguments and advocacy agenda.

- Action 4: Engage member-organizations in planning processes focusing on regional priorities.

Strategy D: Develop a democratic and participatory process for collaborative planning using appropriate models such as Participatory Budgeting to leverage opportunities for joint funding proposals to empower Alliance member organizations and citizens in developing shared projects that address regional priorities.

- Action 1: Develop a process for identifying key projects for partnership and joint fundraising.

- Action 2: Connect with key partners such as UBRI, Citizen's Planning School, UB Law Clinic, PPG, Cornell IRL, Community Foundation and others to explore potential for partnerships on writing a joint proposals in support of the priorities, structure and fiscal needs of the Alliance.

- Action 3: Submit proposal(s) to funder for projects around regional priorities.

Strategy E: Raise awareness about human dependency on the earth and its ecosystems to ensure that the well-being of our supporting ecosystems will always be considered a part of any preservation, planning and/or design action in our region.

- Action 1: Develop Alliance programming which brings members together in smaller groups to expose and identify the interconnections among the organizations in terms of mission and actions, and to discuss the relationship of each organization to current campaigns, such as "Our Outer Harbor" and "Climate Justice Coalition of WNY".

- Action 2: Develop a list of 'questions' to evaluate whether proposed projects or actions support or denigrate the fabric of life in our region, then draft public statements on the Alliance's stance.

- Action 3: Identify and act on opportunities for bringing public statements drafted, and thus our collective voice of the Alliance, into critical positions within the regional conversation.

- Action 4: Begin a longer conversation with the Nature Conservancy, Regional Institute and other planning groups to develop a strategy for the preservation, conservation and expansion of the natural fabric of our region to preserve the base of our food chain, to protect our water and air, and to aid in bio migration because of climate change.

- Action 4: Using Alliance campaigns as a vehicle, consciously introduce language and concepts that reinforce a people-centered transformative paradigm to foster nature.

  For example, in the Outer Harbor campaign, we have been using the language of "public trust" and "public property rights" to bring attention to our shared responsibility and ownership for a commonly owned, valuable resource as we challenge accepted power structures supporting economic development based on private development rights. The Alliance can educate people on their influence as embedded in existing environmental legal structures.

Strategy F: Provide and promote opportunities for youth engagement in order to nurture the future leaders of the environmental movement in Western New York. In spring 2016, the Alliance co-hosted a successful Youth Forum on Climate Justice with the Crossroads Collective. This event brought fifty young people together to gauge their understanding of climate justice. There is an interest, and energy, from the region's young people to be part of this movement. The Alliance should build on this win and help foster a pathway for lifting up youth leaders.

- Action 1: Form a committee comprised of board members for youth engagement. This will show the Alliance's commitment to bring young people into the environmental movement. This committee should be broad reaching and tap into the partners that came together for the Youth Forum on Climate Justice. It will assess local policies and programs that should have opportunities for youth to be at the table, as well as actively seek youth input on policy and planning decisions.

- Action 2: Create a database of local colleges, universities, and high schools, with social and environmental departments or student clubs for targeted outreach and opportunities for member organizations to engage young people in their organizations.

- Action 3: Take steps to develop an internship/fellowship program for local young people aged 15-21 to provide them an opportunity to learn and receive job training from the Alliance and member organizations.

- Action 4: Provide opportunities for young people from different socio-economic, racial, and geographic backgrounds to learn about the region's ecosystem and the different challenges and opportunities their peers face.

CAMPAIGNS. GOAL III: *By 2018, the Alliance will have a process and structure for campaign identification and development, to focus on four or five regional priorities, engage member-organizations and the public, and advocate and mobilize policymakers' support.*

Story Behind the Goal: Over 24 months in 2008 and 2009, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo worked with the University at Buffalo's Urban Design Project to bring together representatives from more than 100 organizations to identify and prioritize challenges facing the region's natural environment. Through that process, "task groups" formed around topics in order to develop issues, actions, and quantifiable measures for the *2009 Shared Agenda for Action*. Those original task groups morphed into *working groups*, which the Community Foundation continued to convene for nearly four years through the WNYEA.

The organization's founders knew that a key function of the Alliance would be to help our region's leaders improve the environment. As such, in 2011, the Alliance board tasked the Working Groups with developing Advocacy Planks. But, over time, it became clear that some working groups were not developing effective planks and the advocacy process was over-burdening the Alliance's member-organizations. Community leaders with expertise in advocacy complained that planks that came out of working groups were unfiltered and unrefined, and lacked strategic direction and specific targets.

Working group chairs said that their groups weren't functioning at a high level because there was no time to conduct outreach, participants didn't have time to help with projects and develop planks, and because working group membership was fluid it was hard to effectively integrate new individuals in to the work while not losing the gains brought further by older members.. Chairs of some working groups struggled to find, space, time, and resources to convene their groups, let alone lead their groups in developing advocacy planks. Yet there were other working groups that continued convening themselves and were very effective.

Anthony Armstrong (former board member and Chair of the Alliance's Urban Regeneration Working Group and consultant at *Make Communities*) said of this divergence:

> *"You need a facilitator and an organizer. You need somebody to help with outreach when those groups start getting low. That work really needs to happen, and on some levels, its unrealistic to think that you're going to find 8 different people who on top of their day jobs are going to be able to take on the level of task to keep these working groups functioning at a high level for that length of time.*
>
> *I would guess that your high-functioning working groups are people who are working on a specific project that is essential to their core mission and organization. If you look at Transportation, that has become a vehicle for Go Bike, whether Justin (Booth) would call himself an organizer or not, he has done an incredible job organizing around Complete Streets work and*

that has become a direct vehicle for bringing people together under the umbrella of the Environmental Alliance."

In moving forward, it is important to remember the original purpose of the Alliance working group meetings; the working groups served to encourage networking and planning amongst once disparate and disconnected environmental organizations. Aside from working group meetings, the general public and individuals involved with member-organizations could sign up for listservs on the GrowWNY website, and individuals could send out and receive message about topics they were concerned with.

In this plan, the Alliance has come up with a new advocacy structure that is agile, flexible, transparent, member-based, and board-informed. Member-organizations will be strategically included in goal-setting, and professional support should be engaged around campaign development. Working groups that wish to continue meeting are welcome to do so and the GrowWNY listservs will still function for communication purposes for anyone interested in staying informed.

To be effective in its advocacy efforts, the Alliance will (1) secure necessary resources to strengthen the process, (2) member-organizations and individuals who are knowledgeable and experienced in advocacy and policy change will be engaged in the process, and (3) pre-existing assets of the Alliance will continue to be employed for networking and collaboration.

Strategies & Action Steps:

Strategy A: Create a structure for the Alliance's support of advocacy campaigns.

- Action 1: Agree on structure for how priorities are chosen for support. Suggestions would utilize multiple forums & tools for comments, discussion and feedback from WNYEA members. Selected campaigns should represent a consensus of the membership. Between three and five (3-5) campaigns may be active at any given time.

- Action 2: Campaigns agreed on for Alliance support become priorities of the organization; the public and member-organizations are invited to get involved in campaign actions and advocacy.

- Action 3: "Seed" the advocacy process by reaching out to lead member-organizations to help them develop strong goals, strategies and campaigns.

- Action 4: Schedule briefings with politicians and invite lead Alliance member-organizations to attend.

Strategy B: Institutionalize process for developing campaigns and discontinue the Alliance's advocacy "plank" process.

- Action 1: Organize member-organizations to network and collaborate around campaign development (see "Goal 3, Strategy C").

- Action 2: Review and analyze the Alliance's by-laws and advocacy policy to determine necessary changes that align with the Alliance's new structure and process.

- Action 3: Approve changes to Alliance by-laws and advocacy policy to reflect new structure and process.

- Action 4: Online and printed materials created describing the process for how member-organizations and the public can get involved in campaigns.

- Action 5: Review GrowWNY website and communication tools to determine which how to use content and tools in new process. Suggestions:
    - Working group webpages (reformat content to be relevant to the topic in question, rather than working groups); and
    - Listservs (keep for conversations relevant to topics).

- Action 6: Capture and retain best elements of current working group structure. Suggestions:
    - Using the GrowWNY email newsletter, working group listservs, phone calls, and in-person meetings to inform working group participants that the Alliance will implement a new structure to encourage more networking and collaboration around campaigns.
    - Allow working groups to continue meetings if they wish.

Strategy C: Use the Annual Congress to engage the public and member-organizations in advocacy process.

- Action 1: Work with key partners to develop and implement planning process and public engagement campaign around the Annual Congress. Suggestions for potential partners could include: UB Regional Institute / One Region Forward, Cornell ILR / Partnership for the Public Good, and Crossroads Collective.

- Action 2: Host Annual Congress around regional goals and priorities.

Strategy D: Engage professional support to use the Alliance's current campaigns ("Our Outer Harbor", "Climate Justice Coalition of WNY", and "Complete Streets") as models to coordinate and lead campaign development, advocacy, messaging, and evaluation.

- Action 1: Secure professional support.

- Action 2: Provide outreach to convene meetings, take notes, and provide follow-up communication for member-organizations engaged in current campaigns.

- Action 3: Build effective, broad-based campaign platform to unify language and message of area organizations working on campaigns.

- Action 4: Conduct cost-benefit analyses in terms of public health and the environment in Western New York, and communicate analyses publicly and to elected officials.

- Action 5: Benchmark, track, and communicate about progress on campaign goals, timelines, strategies, and actions.

Strategy E: Determine operational procedure of individuals associated with the Alliance to reveal relevant issues and advocacy agendas that affect the Alliance's mission and focus.

- Action 1: Identify problem-moments when individuals or organizations associated with the organization did not reveal critical information relevant to issues and advocacy initiatives of the Alliance, and how that affected the organization.

- Action 2: Explore solutions for how the Alliance can facilitate or insist that individuals associated (board members or otherwise) share critical information.

- Action 3: Develop, approve, and institute process for how the Alliance encourages individuals to share critical information.

MEMBERSHIP. GOAL IV: *In 2016 to 2019, the Alliance will empower member-organizations to focus communication, education, and fundraising efforts to collaborate around regional priorities.*

Story Behind the Goal: For decades, environmental groups in Western New York have worked diligently to address legacies of environmental contamination and protect our natural habitat, but often that work was done in "silos" and lacked coordination. The Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo convened and supported the development of the WNY Environmental Alliance to address that issue.

In the three large public congresses that led to the formation of the Alliance, our region's environmental community reiterated the importance of environmental education and public engagement to bring about change for the environment. The Community Foundation provided support to eight working groups to address those issues. The Foundation offered free meeting space, and staff support for meetings and events to take minutes, and to capture stories about their work.

Stories captured by Community Foundation staff were uploaded to the GrowWNY blog and the Green'Zine email-newsletter was used to communicate about environmental initiatives to a broader audience. The GrowWNY website has the tools and functionalities necessary to encourage networking and collaboration of member-organizations, and to serve as a "virtual community" for the environment. In 2013, to continue engaging the public in environmental stewardship initiatives, the Community Foundation transferred maintenance and oversight of the GrowWNY website to the Alliance.

Since its inception, many Alliance member-organizations used GrowWNY consistently. Clean Air Coalition, Riverkeeper, GO Bike Buffalo, Times Beach Nature Preserve and Green Watch, Massachusetts Avenue Project, PUSH Buffalo, and Sierra Club are a few organizations that engaged constituents using either the website or the Grow716 mobile texting services. Many individual supporters also became regular contributors to the website.

In addition to staff support for meetings and the website, the Community Foundation supported member participation in the Alliance as it's grant process was closely tied to whether a not-for-profit was an Alliance member-organizations and whether grant proposals were in line with projects and issues lifted up by working groups to address goals in the Shared Agenda.

Aside from Foundation support, the Alliance itself convened an Education Process Group which met regularly. The Alliance's Education Process Group has seen significant success, having received funding for a collaborative grant proposal, coordinated several K-12 educators' conferences, and created an online Speakers Bureau.

Yet, as staff support from the Community Foundation phased out, the Alliance has seen a decrease in participation of member-organizations on the GrowWNY website and in the working and process groups. Many organizations have shifted their focus, time, and attention elsewhere, again around their specific interests, or internally within their organization's own programming and events.

To these ends, the Alliance is committed (1) to strengthen environmental organizations through collaborative fundraising, training and workshops, and (2) to engage the public in environmental education and stewardship.

Strategies & Action Steps:

Strategy A: The Alliance will encourage collaborative fundraising among member-organizations, especially in approaching grant-making institutions.

- Action 1: When and if possible, when multiple member-organizations are known to be seeking competitive funding from the same source, they will acknowledge that the projects are either very different or that a collaboration is otherwise not feasible.

- Action 2: Whenever possible, the Alliance will not compete with member-organizations for funding from the same source(s). When such occasions do occur, the Alliance will investigate the opportunity for collaboration with the member(s).

Strategy B: Develop capacity-building courses and training for member-organizations.

- Action 1: Work with One Region Forward Citizen's Planning School to identify needs for courses and to determine what is available locally (e.g., Clean Air Coalition's Lois Gibb's Fellowship, Open Buffalo's Emerging Leaders program, One Region Forward Citizen Planning School, Cornell ILR / PPG's Politics 101 training on advocacy and lobby visits, United Way's non-profit trainings, Squeaky Wheel and CEPA's media workshops, etc.)

- Action 2: Work with area groups offering relevant courses and trainings to partner to make courses and trainings available to member-organizations.

- Action 3: Identify gaps in trainings and develop a plan to make additional capacity-building courses and trainings available for member-organizations.

Strategy C: Build a promotional program that brands Buffalo as a green biophilic city that works to create elected officials and community members as environmental stewards.

- Action 1: Seek national funding to develop Buffalo's *Tale of Two Cities.*

- Action 2: Develop and implement a communications campaign that incorporates branding and messaging around urgency of climate justice and racial equity for Buffalo.

- Action 3: Write a thought piece that re-imagines Buffalo as a green city (e.g. "Buffalo, clean energy poster city" or "Buffalo, the city of the future").

- Action 4: Collect and "name" regional successes (e.g., this is what a green neighborhood looks like, what a clean river looks like, what an urban farm looks like.

- Action 5: Adopt messaging around 100% transition to clean energy.

Strategy D: Advance a messaging and content development program around strategic points that utilizes both Alliance and member-directed communication initiatives

- Action 1: Capture new material by working with member-organizations to engage people from their frontlines in telling their stories.

- Action 2: Using climate justice issue as a model, develop original content and messaging that resonates with multiple audiences in diverse (faith, labor, economic, social justice, health-related, municipal and business) environmental and non-environmental groups.

- Action 3: Engage with "non-traditional" environmental groups to obtain and publish stories and art from people on the frontlines (e.g., blogs, video, photography of people most impacted by the climate justice issue).

- Action 4: Push out stories and art published on the GrowWNY website using e-newsletter, social media, and listservs.

- Action 5: Identify online platforms of state and national coalitions and foundations that member-organizations are involved with that can help us spread stories from WNY's environmental community (e.g., push out and co-publish stories from GrowWNY on the New Economy Coalition website, NY Renews, Chorus Foundation, Overbrook Foundation, etc.)

Strategy E: Re-establish the GrowWNY website as a vehicle to serve goals and priorities.

- Action 1: Revamp the GrowWNY website's "Working Group" webpages as "Issues" or "Campaigns" of concerns to Alliance member-organizations.

- Action 2: Using information from the GrowWNY website's "Working Group" webpages, create and distribute static papers on environmental issues of concern to the Alliance member-organizations

- Action 3: Use same static paper content in action 2 above to create web-friendly content and ask Alliance member-organizations to include this on their websites.

- Action 4: Review *2013 GrowWNY 2.0 Strategic Plan* to determine how to use the GrowWNY website and Alliance communications (e-newsletter, listservs, etc.) to address organization's new goals, campaigns, and advocacy process.

- Action 5: Create and implement plans to ensure Alliance communication and the GrowWNY website are continually aligned to Alliance goals, activities and advocacy processed.

- Action 6: Benchmark and regularly evaluate the GrowWNY website and Alliance communications to determine challenges and success.