

Humanity in Action

**The Future We Dare to Imagine:
Humanity in Action's Strategic Plan**
September 2025 - December 2026

www.HumanityInAction.org



Introduction

The Humanity in Action Strategic Plan aims to carry forward our founder's legacy and expand our impact at this critical juncture when democracy is under attack, while also returning the organization to financial sustainability.

The short-term plan is built on four pillars:

- 1. Deepen Support for the Senior Fellows Network**
- 2. Relaunch our Flagship US Fellowship Program**
- 3. Enhance Governance & Operational Capacity for Excellence**
- 4. Rebuild Fundraising Capacity to Achieve Financial Sustainability**

This plan is transitional in nature, providing a strategic framework to organize our collective action over the next 15 months into a series of essential steps. Its intent is to guide a successful leadership transition and reposition Humanity in Action for the future.



Our North Star

A Future We Collectively Dare to Imagine

This section is a compilation of the survey responses to the question: **“What is your vision for the world that you hope Humanity in Action can help create?”**

We imagine a world where justice is nurtured by leaders grounded in history, guided by moral purpose but aware of its complexities, and equipped to act with courage. In this world, democracy is more than a legal framework; it is collective care, the protection of minority rights, and the dismantling of systems of dominance and violence. Pluralism is practiced daily, with disagreement embraced as a path to deeper understanding. Resistance to genocide, war, oppression, and environmental destruction is consistent and courageous. Truth is defended, compassion is practiced when it's hardest, and movements are sustained by love, memory, and imagination. The younger generation – especially from historically excluded communities must not only have a seat at the table, they must also have the tools necessary to meet the defining challenges of the next era.

Humanity in Action is the catalyst, incubator, and connective tissue for this vision. We cultivate principled, brave, and morally grounded leaders who listen deeply, confront complexity, and act across differences. Our Senior Fellows transform connection into collective action in classrooms, courtrooms, parliaments, and civil society movements worldwide. We challenge antisemitism, anti-Blackness, Islamophobia, racism, xenophobia, and class oppression, all while elevating dialogue on decolonization, climate justice, and human rights in a world marked by polarization and rapid technological change. Our network is democratic infrastructure in motion, a global solidarity network for leadership development, enabling leaders to resist authoritarianism, protect human dignity, and reimagine governance rooted in equity and sustainability.



The Context

The question is not whether Humanity in Action is still relevant. Instead, we look at the world and ask: how could we live without HIA?

Democratic pluralism continues its retreat in many HIA countries and beyond. The rise of authoritarianism has undermined the rule of law and rolled back many hard-fought gains in human rights and democratic processes. Official capacity within and across nations to address the world's most pressing problems is diminishing rapidly. Democracy and human rights advocates need more support to continue their work resisting the erosion of norms in the current climate, while regrouping to create new approaches to advance democratic pluralism in national and international governance.

At the same time, Humanity in Action is at a crossroads of our own. Following a period marked by change and financial strain, we began 2025 with an approved annual budget of \$970k in expenses but only \$547k in revenue, and net financial assets of only \$576k. Our lack of resources have not allowed us to offer a U.S. Fellowship for two years nor a Senior Fellows conference for three .

Against this backdrop, Azadeh (Azi) Khalili was appointed Executive Director of Humanity in Action in April 2025. After a rapid organizational assessment, Azi has reduced 2025's forecasted deficit by more than 25 percent on an annualized basis, while starting this strategic planning process to facilitate the organization's leadership transition and organizational repositioning so that Humanity in Action may reclaim its storied legacy while preparing a long-term plan to advance towards our North Star.



Strategic Planning Process

Given the arrival of a new Executive Director, the depth of current financial challenge, and the extraordinary pace of change in the larger operating environment, this plan purposely adopts a relatively short time horizon – 15 months – to stabilize the organization; build governance, operational and fundraising capacity; and to make critical investments to reposition Humanity in Action to achieve its mission in a more profound and sustainable way. The work to articulate the strategic framework for our immediate actions was grounded in our shared values and deep organizational history, and informed by the urgent needs of our time.

Our strategic planning process was inclusive and participatory, designed to reflect the voices and experiences of those most connected to our mission. Between June and August of 2025, we engaged 193 stakeholders across all national Humanity in Action offices, including 166 Senior Fellows, 15 members of the Board of Directors and 12 staff members through surveys, one-on-one interviews, and in-depth conversations.

From this broad consultation, having synthesized multiple levels of input and analysis, we have developed a strategic framework centered on **four key goals:**

1. Deepen Support for the Senior Fellows Network
2. Relaunch our Flagship U.S. Fellowship Program
3. Enhance Governance & Operational Capacity for Excellence
4. Rebuild Fundraising Capacity to Achieve Financial Sustainability



Goal #1:

Deepen Support of the HIA Senior Fellows Network

Objective: A vibrant, engaged Senior Fellows network is central to Humanity in Action's long-term impact. Senior Fellows seek programming that is timely, courageous, and globally literate. We heard a demand for programming that addresses not only current events, but the structural systems behind them. As we shape future engagement and dialogues, we commit to:

- Centering democracy and civic agency while amplifying diverse global experiences.
- Continuing to address migration, displacement, and human rights crises with clarity and moral courage.
- Exploring the intersections of technology, ethics, identity, and justice.
- Tackling structural discrimination head-on – including antisemitism, Islamophobia, gender oppression, racism, and shrinking spaces.
- Linking climate conversations to economic justice, global solidarity, and Indigenous and alternative systems of knowledge.



Strategy: We aim to better support and strengthen the Senior Fellows Network through more frequent and more strategic convening and more compelling internal and external communications. We aim to strengthen relationships, catalyze mentorship and collaboration, and strengthen the platforms for Senior Fellows to disseminate their work and expand their reach.

- Monthly Micro-Forums: 30-minute sessions spotlighting bold ideas and lived experiences from within the network, informed by Fellows' feedback.
- Quarterly Dialogues & Skills Exchanges: In-depth webinars and workshops featuring global and local experts to foster knowledge exchange and action.
- Peer-Led Community Spaces – Assembly Circles: Monthly gatherings organized by senior fellows for Senior Fellows to foster trust, reflection, and informal dialogue across borders.
- Regional Stakeholder Gatherings: Building on the success of the gathering hosted by Azi at the Fund for the City of New York—which brought together 70 Senior Fellows, board members, donors, and partners—HIA will hold similar convenings in 2025 in San Francisco and either Boston or Washington, D.C.
- HIA Impact Report: A revamped bimonthly external communication to HIA stakeholders highlighting Senior Fellows' contributions to democracy and social change, showcasing their achievements and collective impact.
- Senior Fellows IntraWeb and Newsletter: Strengthen our internal network platforms to support ongoing engagement, share opportunities, and amplify Fellows' work.

These events will strengthen relationships, foster collaboration, and deepen engagement with our community across regions.



Goal #2: Relaunch our Flagship U.S. Fellowship Program

Objective: Recruit and engage 20–25 emerging young leaders to participate in a U.S. Fellowship Program.

Strategy: Develop a program designed to equip Fellows with the tools to launch initiatives, advocate for change, and build enduring cross-border collaborations.



Goal #3:

Enhance Governance & Operational Capacity for Excellence

Objective: Cultivate an engaged, high-performing board of directors and a staff that is continuously growing, receiving regular training, and evolving to meet organizational needs.

Strategy:

- Engage the Board to proactively accomplish its three key functions: 1) governance and oversight; 2) brand ambassadorship; and 3) ensuring financial sustainability of the mission.
 - Ensure all board committees meet regularly and deliver on key deliverables.
 - Provide fiduciary training to board members to ensure they understand their governance and oversight roles.
 - Engage the board in fundraising by clearly defining expectations for donor cultivation, board give/get commitments, and identifying new funding opportunities.
 - Improve communications by ensuring the Executive Director provides the board with regular updates on progress toward the four strategic plan goals, including any action steps that may be required of the board.
- Invest in Staff Training and Development: Prioritize professional growth to equip staff to respond to the evolving needs of Fellows and Senior Fellows amidst evolving global democratic issues.
 - Training Priorities: Program Development, Democracy Education, Facilitation & Dialogue Leadership, Conflict Resolution, and Cross-Cultural Competency.
 - Finalize and publish an HIA pedagogy and methodology manual to ensure consistent application across all offices and serve as a blueprint for establishing future HIA offices in the Global South.
- Staff Structure & Leadership Roles: Formalize leadership roles; update and revamp job descriptions, work assignments, and accountability structures; and improve task management systems with clear deadlines and evaluation procedures to ensure operational excellence.
- Culture & Wellness: Create a more supportive work environment by promoting work-life balance, hosting retreats, and encouraging regular reflection days.

Goal #4:

Rebuild Fundraising Capacity to Achieve Financial Sustainability

Objective: Transition from a structural deficit with meager reserves to a financially stable and resilient organization, laying the groundwork for long-term sustainability and growth.

2025 Fundraising Goal: Raise an additional \$100,000 beyond what is provided for in our 2025 adopted budget (\$547,000 in revenue) that will, when combined with expense reductions, cut the operating deficit in half.

2026 Fundraising Goal: Raise \$750,000-\$1,500,000 to eliminate the structural deficit and fully fund the strategic plan actions for 2026.



Strategies: Focus on building the internal infrastructure for fundraising from individuals and foundations and through planned giving. With a strategic plan, a more engaged network of Senior Fellows, a renewed partnership with Humanity in Action's charismatic founder, and a purposeful suite of communications to better tell our story, we will be well positioned to engage in more systematic outreach to a broader range of potential funders.

- Build Humanity in Action's internal infrastructure for fundraising:
- Reorganize, update and enhance our data systems to identify, cultivate, and track individual donors and foundations.
- Create and actively manage a prospect list of potential individual donors and foundations.
- Streamline and enhance grant writing operations to produce more (and better quality) proposals to foundations and major donors.
- Create and maintain organizational profiles on GuideStar (Candid) and Charity Navigator to increase transparency, visibility, and credibility with potential funders.
- Create materials and protocols for planned giving so that HIA is seen as a worthy option for legacy giving.
- Adopt a "give-get" policy for the board of directors to require minimum annual financial contributions to Humanity in Action from all members.
- Nurture a culture of board member involvement in donor cultivation and funding solicitations.
- Launch a Senior Fellows giving circle to acknowledge current donors among the Senior Fellows and encourage others to participate.
- Enhance end-of-year giving campaigns.
- Engage Donor Advised Fund (DAFs) managers to raise brand awareness of HIA and identify new potential donors.
- Position Humanity in Action to celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2027 with a plan for communications and a fundraising campaign of \$1,500,000-2,000,000.



Next Steps and Implementation

In the coming weeks, the staff will develop a detailed implementation plan for the 2025–2026 strategic goals. This plan will outline clear timelines, specific action steps, and measurable outcomes to ensure accountability and progress across all four strategic goals. We will prioritize aligning resources effectively and defining roles and responsibilities to support these initiatives. The staff will also address risk management and contingency planning, ensuring that the organization is prepared to navigate potential challenges, including funding shortfalls or programmatic adjustments.

The Executive Director is committed to reducing the 2025 deficit by 50% and maintaining the 2026 budget between \$750,000 and \$800,000. A proposed budget to implement the identified strategies in 2026 will be included in the organizational budget presented to the Humanity in Action Board of Directors for approval in December 2025.



Staffing Required to Accomplish the Four Goals (2025–2026)

Position	Status	Key Role
Executive Director	FT	Provides overall leadership, vision, and strategic direction; leads fundraising; represents HIA publicly; co-leads the 2026 U.S. Fellowship; manages all Board relations training for Board and staff and manages relations with all HIA European Offices.
Director of Operations	FT	Oversees day-to-day operations and organizational systems; recruits 2026 US Fellows and serves as point of contact for international fellowship implementation process.
Senior Fellows Engagement Manager	FT	Strengthens engagement, programming, and connections within the Senior Fellow network.
Communications Coordinator	PT	Manages branding, digital presence, media relations, and marketing materials.
Financial Manager	PT	Manages budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, and compliance.
Systems Coordinator	PT	Maintains and improves internal systems, databases, and technology tools.
Fundraiser	PT	Assist the Executive Director in development fundraising.



Acknowledgements

Humanity in Action would like to thank our Senior Fellows, the Board of Directors, Staff Team, Partners and Advisors for their guidance and input in creating this Strategic Plan.

This document is a product of our collective effort.