

The New Bedford Light
Summer 2026-Summer 2029 Strategic Plan
Executive Summary

The New Bedford Light’s first strategic plan is the result of a rigorous, inclusive planning process based on stakeholder input and industry research. We benchmarked our performance against peer organizations and gathered a range of perspectives — more than 50 internal and external stakeholders contributed through one-on-one interviews and group conversations.

During the process, The Light remained deeply grounded in its mission while recognizing the importance of aligning ambitions with our resources to focus on priorities where we can have the greatest community impact.

The three-year plan identifies **five strategic priorities** designed to strengthen The Light’s journalism while building a strong and sustainable future:

1. Ensure Financial Success
2. Sharpen and Align the Editorial Identity
3. Grow Audience Reach and Deepen Community Engagement
4. Strengthen Talent and Organizational Capacity
5. Strengthen Board Governance and Development

The strategic plan also reaffirmed and refined **The Light’s mission statement**:

“We inform and nourish the civic culture of New Bedford and surrounding towns by providing in-depth, fact-based journalism and a broad platform for diverse community voices. The Light helps educate the public on the vital role of a free press in bolstering our democracy.”

We invite the community to hold us accountable. Thank you.

The New Bedford Light: Strategic Plan

APPROVED BY BOARD ON APRIL 30, 2026

Objectives

The Light resolved throughout the planning process not to try to be all things to all people and to reasonably align expectations and workload with human and financial resources.

The Light also determined to remain deeply grounded in the mission throughout the planning process. As a mission-driven, not-for-profit organization, it is essential to reassert the mission and stakeholders' alignment with it in the strategic plan.

Research

Primary (interviews) and secondary (industry overview) research findings help create a meaningful assessment of The Light's major Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (or Risks).

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SWOT Findings

*There are many SWOT findings. Key among them are **Strengths** such as being well-led with a proven track record and cadre of talented young journalists as well as **Opportunities** such as better engaging underrepresented populations, translating long-form journalism onto shorter-form platforms, and hiring a development leader.*

***Weaknesses and Threats/Risks** to be addressed include ever-present financial pressures, insufficiently diverse donor base, lack of dedicated audience-development resources, and the ongoing challenge of developing and retaining talent.*

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SWOT Findings Lead to Five Priorities

1. Ensure Financial Success
2. Sharpen and Align the Editorial Identity
3. Grow Audience Reach and Deepen Community Engagement
4. Strengthen Talent and Organizational Capacity
5. Strengthen Board Governance and Development



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FINANCIAL SUCCESS

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Priority #1: Calibrating Success

Ensure Financial Success

The Light will have succeeded when it has a more diversified and resilient revenue base, a deeper professional development function, and a broader network of engaged supporters.

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Priority #1: Ensure Financial Success

1. Action 1.1: Develop greater fundraising capacity.
2. Action 1.2: Build a more productive development strategy and culture.
3. Action 1.3: Create core messaging and marketing plan.
4. Action 1.4: Explore underdeveloped revenue opportunities.

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Editorial



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Priority #2: Calibrating Success Sharpen and Align Editorial Identity

The Light will have succeeded when there is little daylight among staff, Board, and community on The Light's core identity, what kind of journalism it delivers, and how it measures impact and reflects the community it serves.

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Priority #2: Sharpen and Align Editorial Identity

1. Action 2.1: Reassert The Light's editorial mission, approach, and unique value.
2. Action 2.2: Establish a comprehensive framework for measuring journalistic success.
3. Action 2.3: Center the community in editorial content.

The word "AUDIENCE" is displayed in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Each letter is a different color and has a 3D effect with a shadow. The colors are: A (orange), U (green), D (blue), I (green), E (blue), N (orange), C (green), and E (green).

Priority #3: Calibrating Success

Grow Audience Reach and Deepen Community Engagement

The Light will have succeeded when it has measurably expanded its audience – particularly with underrepresented populations (in terms of race, ethnicity, age, wealth) – and has a disciplined, repeatable process for understanding and responding to community information needs.

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Priority #3: Grow Audience Reach and Deepen Community Engagement

1. Action 3.1: Build a disciplined process for understanding community information needs.
2. Action 3.2: Evolve content formats and distribution to meet audiences where they are.
3. Action 3.3: Cultivate younger readers and underrepresented communities.
4. Action 3.4: Experiment with increased regional, topical coverage.

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Priority #4: Calibrating Success Strengthen Talent and Organizational Capacity

The Light will have succeeded when it consistently provides meaningful, ongoing professional development, maintains competitive compensation, retains its talented staff, and builds a pipeline of future talent – especially from the local community.

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Priority #4: Strengthen Talent and Organizational Capacity

1. Action 4.1: Strengthen internal culture and identity.
2. Action 4.2: Focus on retention, professional development, and pipeline building.
3. Action 4.3: Stay competitive on compensation and benefits.
4. Action 4.4: Cultivate local talent.

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BOARD

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Priority #5: Calibrating Success Strengthen Board Governance and Development

The Light will have succeeded when the Board operates with clear expectations, a leadership pipeline, a robust onboarding process, and a regular self-evaluation practice. Success will ultimately be realized when all Board members understand policies and practices and are fully engaged in the work according to the priorities established in this plan.

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Priority #5: Strengthen Board Governance and Development

1. Action 5.1: Systematize board recruiting and succession planning.
2. Action 5.2: Implement a Vice Chair role.
3. Action 5.3: Establish clear expectations and robust onboarding.
4. Action 5.4: Institute a Board self-evaluation process.
5. Action 5.5: Develop a CEO retention/succession plan.

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Mission Statement – A Reassertion

We inform and nourish the civic culture of New Bedford and surrounding towns by providing in-depth, fact-based journalism and a broad platform for diverse community voices. The Light helps educate the public on the vital role of a free press in bolstering our democracy.

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